

GERMAN  
AS A  
JEWISH  
PROBLEM

THE  
LANGUAGE POLITICS  
OF  
JEWISH NATIONALISM

MARC VOLOVICI

# GERMAN AS A JEWISH PROBLEM

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*The Language Politics of Jewish Nationalism*

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MARC VOLOVICI

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## INTRODUCTION

In March 2008, German chancellor Angela Merkel visited the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. Several Knesset members left the hall demonstratively when Merkel began her speech in German, to protest the use of German in an official speech in the Knesset. The most vocal opponent of the decision to allow Merkel to speak in her mother tongue was Arie Elad, a secular, right-wing politician who had stated a few days earlier, “It is extremely irritating to hear the German language from the podium of the Knesset.” In another interview, he said, “This was the language in which my grandfather and grandmother were murdered.”<sup>1</sup> Objecting to Elad’s stance, former speaker of the Knesset and Labor Party member Avraham Burg countered, “This was the language in which *Mein Kampf* was written, but [it was] also the language in which Herzl wrote.” Burg noted that his father, a German-born Religious Zionist and minister in the Israeli government, “did not object to speeches delivered in German, because languages are not guilty, only those speaking them.”<sup>2</sup>

This furor was only the latest in a series of controversies erupting in the Israeli media and political sphere since the early 2000s, when German leaders were about to deliver speeches in German in the Knesset. In 2005, Likud member Dani Naveh, the son of a Bergen-Belsen survivor, wrote in a letter to German president Horst Köhler before his planned visit: “Delivering your

speech in the language in which the Nazi thuggish soldiers [*kalgasim*] hurried members of my people and of my family to the gas chambers would be a chilling reminder of those days." At the same time, Ukrainian-born Roman Bronfman, a former Knesset member, argued that "German is not only the language of the Nazis, but also and above all the language of Einstein, Kafka, Herzl, and Heine."<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, Amnon Dankner, the liberal-leaning chief editor of *Maariv*, rejected Naveh's approach as "childish provincialism," adding, "The Nazis do not own the language. They only used it until they vanished. Prior to and after the Nazi period it has been the language of a great, diverse, fascinating culture to which our ancestors contributed their share." Dankner, who was born in Jerusalem in 1946, recalled that "German was the language in which my parents spoke to each other and to their friends and relatives. Not all of them were rooted in German culture—among them were Polish, German, Czech, Hungarian, and Romanian immigrants, but the language common to all of them was German."<sup>4</sup>

What does the German language signify, to whom, and when? Is it the language of the German classics, of German Jewish writers and scientists, of Herzl and the Zionist movement, of East Central European Jewish culture, or of Hitler, Goebbels, and the German guards in Nazi concentration camps? The different answers to this question derive from different readings and interpretations of Jewish history. Indeed, the question of how Jews ought to understand the significance of German is an old one. Since the eighteenth century, German has held a momentous and multifaceted place in the history of European Jews, serving as a catalyst of secularization, emancipation, and assimilation in various Jewish communities within and without German-speaking areas. In the eyes of both Jewish proponents and opponents of the Enlightenment, German had the capacity to radically transform the worldview of Jews and the outlook of Jewish societies. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the German language played a key, if fraught, role in Jewish nationalist politics. The "Nazification" of the German language was but one stage in a long history of tensions, engagements, and disagreements over the image and function of German in Jewish societies. However, the history of the German language as an integral and contested part of the Jewish social landscape has been largely overshadowed by the catastrophic events that befell Jews under Nazi rule.



This book tells the Jewish history of the German language, focusing on German's paradoxical place in Jewish nationalism. The paradox begins with the fact that German played an indispensable role in the formulation and dissemination of Jewish national ideologies, in particular Zionism, the movement advocating the establishment of Jewish self-government in Palestine. Beyond its practical merit, German served Jewish nationalists as a role model, owing to its place as a unifying national language in German history and its status as an international medium of culture, science, and politics. Moreover, the historical and linguistic influence of German on Ashkenazi Jewish cultures since the late Middle Ages makes the German language an essential element in any historical account of Jews as an ethnic, religious, and national collective.

Some early Jewish nationalists, though, associated German with historical currents that *undermined* the postulate of Jewish national unity. German stood at the heart of the ideology of the late eighteenth-century German Jewish Enlightenment (the Berlin Haskalah), which called upon Jews to embrace German as a vital step toward becoming equal, respectable members of society. Coupled with state-run reforms intended to transform the Jewish social order, German became a primary vehicle for Jewish modernization in Central and Eastern Europe. For many Jews, both religious and secular, this process seemed to enhance the withdrawal of Jews from their Jewish self-understanding. German was thus associated with liberal and assimilatory currents, but it was simultaneously a significant vehicle in the consolidation of Jewish national movements. German was part of the problem Jewish nationalists sought to address—but also part of the solution.

This book traces the shifting meanings of German in Jewish history between 1870 and the aftermath of the Holocaust, using it as a prism for understanding the historical, religious, and ideological tensions and contradictions embedded in Jewish nationalism. German is a valuable object of research precisely because it was a multifaceted signifier onto which a variety of ideas could be inscribed. To be sure, German was not at the center of Jewish nationalism's ideological debates. Nationalists engaging in the "language question" were debating which language should be considered the Jewish national language: Hebrew, the historical language of Jewish learning and ritual, or Yiddish, the language spoken by the vast majority of Eastern European Jews.

However, this book shows that it is impossible to understand the history of Jewish nationalism without examining German's pivotal and deeply controversial presence within it.

### German and the Boundaries of Jewish Nationhood

Scholars have paid considerable attention to questions of language in modern Jewish history.<sup>5</sup> Several monographs offer in-depth histories of Yiddish and Hebrew, and scholars have produced important studies of Jewish multilingualism.<sup>6</sup> Arie Bruce Saposnik and Liora Halperin have explored the challenges that visionaries, functionaries, and ordinary men and women faced in their effort to advance the Hebrew language in the Jewish community in Palestine (Yishuv).<sup>7</sup> Saposnik's book focuses on the late Ottoman period and is particularly valuable in its unpacking of the idea of Hebrew culture. Halperin's study, centered on the Yishuv under the British Mandate, investigates the Jewish community's multilingual character, which persisted despite the Yishuv leadership's efforts to consolidate a Hebrew-speaking society.

This book builds on Saposnik's and Halperin's lines of inquiry and takes seriously their call to situate the history of modern Hebrew within broader national and imperial contexts. However, I take a closer look at the internal hierarchies of Jewish multilingualism and probe the distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish languages in the modern period. Theories of Jewish linguistic practices, such as those developed by Max Weinreich and Benjamin Harshav, tend to abide by the notion that even when Jews were proficient in a non-Jewish language they deemed it a "majority language" or "language of power," as Harshav put it. Harshav conceded that there are good reasons to include Jewish writing in non-Jewish languages under the category of "Jewish literature," but his underlying distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish languages remains.<sup>8</sup> Weinreich famously distinguished between Jewish "internal bilingualism" (referring to Hebrew and Yiddish or other Jewish languages) and "external bilingualism" (referring to the use of majority languages). Here, too, the separation between the Jewish and the non-Jewish is firm.<sup>9</sup>

Evidently, this separation has been integral to Jewish history. It was embraced by many of the protagonists of this book, and it continues to play an important role in understandings of Jewish culture and nationhood to this

day. And yet, as Naomi Seidman argues, it is difficult to uphold the division between an “internal” Jewish linguistic realm and an “external” non-Jewish one.<sup>10</sup> In this book I demonstrate that the German language is an instructive case for critically examining this divide. I argue not that German was a “Jewish language,” but that the ways in which German permeated Jewish political, cultural, and religious life did much to blur the distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish languages.

This is evident in the following excerpt from a memoir by Roman Zimand, a descendent of Galician Jews: “Father, who went only to *heder* [traditional Jewish elementary school]. . . knew five languages: Hebrew, Yiddish, German, Polish, and Ukrainian. . . . No one thought of this as anything extraordinary. ‘True’ foreign languages were French and English. If you had asked my father before World War I, he would certainly have answered that he knew no foreign language.”<sup>11</sup> Setting aside the question of what “knowing” these languages meant, this excerpt illustrates how perfectly normal it was for Habsburg Jews—as for other minorities in the empire—to use the languages of their surroundings. But it is telling that, according to Zimand’s account, none of these languages counted as “foreign.” Accounts of the place of German in Jewish religious life further challenge the distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish languages. The Prague-born Jewish scholar Hugo Bergmann recalled in an autobiographical essay how one day his aunt returned home outraged from the synagogue, after the recently appointed young rabbi prayed in front of the Torah Ark in Czech, not in the customary language of Jewish ritual, German. For her and for people of her background, Bergmann wrote, “German had become a half-holy language.”<sup>12</sup> Or consider this observation, made by Zionist writer Moshe Kleinman in 1909: “When modern ‘speakers’ enter a synagogue in Russia and speak in Russian, or when they enter a Polish synagogue and speak in Polish . . . , it appears as a desecration of the place, for they are speaking ‘goyish’ in a holy place. But when entering in the very same place and speaking German . . . , it appears as an entirely natural thing to do.”<sup>13</sup> Kleinman attributed this to the fact that German was linguistically related to Yiddish and, as such, sounded less foreign to the Jewish listener. This may be correct, but the explanation is also interwoven with other factors that had turned German into a language that was both inside and outside the realm of Jewish languages. Jewish nationalists

often argued that there was an essential difference between the two linguistic domains, yet precisely such arguments were indicative of the unsettled boundaries between them. By being more attentive to the porousness of the barrier between Jewish and non-Jewish languages, we can problematize the labels that are often ascribed to languages and the ideological assumptions that underlie them.

Scholars of German Jewish culture have shown how German-speaking Jews were rooted in the German language, without it necessarily contradicting their Jewish self-understanding.<sup>14</sup> Similar sentiments may readily be found in Jews' relationship to Russian, Polish, Spanish, and other languages. Indeed, Russian Jewish reformers in the mid-nineteenth century saw the acquisition of Russian as key to the social advancement of Jews. French likewise carried the image of a cultivating language for Jews residing in France and its colonies. The relationship of Jews to languages of their surroundings could be as existential and enduring as their relation to Hebrew and Yiddish, if not more so. What distinguished German from other languages, however, was the fact that it played a central role—socially, linguistically, and ideologically—in the transformation of Jewish societies well beyond German-speaking lands.<sup>15</sup>

Eric Hobsbawm asserted that in the age of emancipation, “German was the pathway to modernity,” and that “the road . . . from provincialism to the wider world was paved with German letters.”<sup>16</sup> As hyperbolic as it may sound, this statement reflected a commonplace perception among European Jews in the long nineteenth century. To be sure, processes of departure from Jewish tradition could occur with or without the help of German. However, German did acquire the symbolic status of a language with a considerable power to transform the lives of Jews and to grant them access to universal and secular knowledge. This had been the experience of Jews in Eastern Europe, and it appeared in various literary pieces. In Mordekhai Ze'ev Feinerberg's 1898 novella *Whither?*, for example, the reader follows the life and consciousness of Nahman in his shift from a traditional Eastern European life to an identification with Jewish nationalist ideas. At a certain point, Nahman's wife encourages him to wean himself from his “bestiality” by working with a language tutor, who clandestinely teaches him “the language of the state and the language of Ashkenaz [German].” After being introduced to

Western texts, “everything that had been part of him, all of his thoughts, his methods of inquiry, were uprooted from his heart . . . he thinks now novel thoughts, he aspires for new worlds, his heart is filled with thunder and strong emotions.”<sup>17</sup>

The idea that German encapsulated high culture and universal knowledge was part and parcel of the Jewish imagination, and as such it had an actual historical force. This has been studied thoroughly by historians of German Jewry and by scholars of the Eastern European Haskalah and Yiddish literature.<sup>18</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, Western Europeans (Jewish and non-Jewish) often emphasized the respectable stature of German to contrast it with Yiddish and with Eastern European Jews as a whole, describing them as uneducated, parochial individuals who speak only the languages of the “ghetto.”<sup>19</sup> Jewish nationalists, however, often mobilized precisely this factor to present Western European Jews as illiterate from a Jewish nationalist perspective, thus reversing the conventional dichotomy of the acculturated *Westjude* and the backward *Ostjude*. At the same time, numerous Eastern European Jewish nationalists were immersed in German literature, lived for extensive periods in German-speaking lands, and mobilized German as a carrier of their ideas. German thus occupied a profoundly ambivalent role, reinforcing opposing currents in Jewish nationalism.

Exploring the presence of German across borders makes it important to draw a distinction: the use of the category “German-speaking Jews” can be misleading because it assumes a level of knowledge and active use that usually did not apply to those living outside German-speaking areas. Instead, this book points to the category of “German-reading Jews,” a geographically broader group, ranging from Russia to the Americas and to Palestine, and including individuals who acquired German at some stage of their lives without it necessarily being central to their self-understanding. Many of them were active consumers of German literature and political debates, and some of them even took part in such debates, while seeking to distinguish between the functional and the ideological significance of German. It was this scattered collective of German-reading Jews that imbued German with many of the symbolic meanings it has acquired in Jewish culture since the late eighteenth century. The history of Jewish nationalism has been directly informed by this linguistic predicament: Jewish nationalists mobilized the

transnational quality of German in Jewish societies to advance their cause while combating the ubiquity of German. The question of whether diminishing German's centrality in Jewish societies was possible, and if so, whether it was desirable, would hover in the background of various debates in the history of Jewish nationalism. As Jewish nationalists navigated between the ideological significance and the functional merit of German—which, as this book demonstrates, were often not easily separable—key questions of the modern Jewish diasporic condition came to the surface.

### Multilingualism in Jewish Nationalism

Scholars of Jewish nationalism tend to focus on Yiddish and Hebrew as the ideological pillars of the Jewish language question—and understandably so.<sup>20</sup> The consolidation of Hebraist and Yiddishist ideologies and cultures defined to a considerable degree the Jewish political culture of the early twentieth century.<sup>21</sup> Even a cursory look at the Jewish press from that period reveals abundant discussion on Hebrew, Yiddish, their role in Jewish societies, and their anticipated futures. However, looking exclusively at Hebrew and Yiddish risks concealing the presence of other languages in Jewish politics. Indeed, one of the themes on which Hebraists and Yiddishists could agree was that an urgent menace to Jewish national vitality was assimilation into gentile society, with linguistic assimilation often perceived as an alarming stage in that process. Yet from a Jewish national perspective, foreign languages were not equally perilous. German represented to Jewish nationalists a distinct threat, owing to its perceived quality as a catalyst of assimilation.

Jewish nationalists grappled with the German language in different ways, as the case of the Zionist movement reveals. Common perception has it that the Zionist leadership's cultural orientation dictated the German-centered character of the movement. The figures who are often the first to be invoked in this context are its leaders and ideologues at the turn of the century, Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau, both of whom were products of middle-class, German-speaking Central European Jewry. However, long before figures like Herzl and Nordau entered Zionist politics, Eastern European Jewish nationalists had begun mobilizing German as a medium of political agitation across borders. As such, its centrality within Zionism tapped into a longer tradition of Jewish and European political movements. At the same time,

the centrality of German generated a tension between two different exigencies: propagating the idea of Zionism and advancing Jewish linguistic unity around Jews' national language, Hebrew.<sup>22</sup>

The First World War was a transition point in this respect. The collapse of Imperial Germany crushed the Zionists' hope of German support for Jewish self-government in Palestine. The vanishing of the Habsburg Empire further eroded German's image as a language of European politics that allegedly transcended ethnic divisions. Moreover, the war drastically compromised German's status as a global language of science and knowledge. In 1930, rabbi Ozjasz Thon of Krakow published a German compilation of essays on Zionism written mostly before the war. In his introduction, Thon commented on his decision to stop publishing in German after the war. He noted that German had been the exclusive language of Zionist activity. However, during the war, Zionism "underwent an English translation," alongside an intensification of Zionist activity in Hebrew and in "the language of the people, Yiddish." The war was thus "a lightning moment of the movement's fulfillment and realization."<sup>23</sup>

Thon described the movement's shifting linguistic practice as an organic process of the rise of invigorated Jewish languages alongside English, the language of Palestine's new ruling power. However, this shift could also be seen as part of what scholar Mark Gelber described as the movement's "de-Germanization."<sup>24</sup> In the interwar period, the number of Hebrew speakers in Palestine increased steadily and the British Mandate recognized Hebrew as an official language. This contributed to the movement's "Hebraization." The Zionist Congress, however, continued to be held predominantly in German, and the pressure on German Zionist leaders, writers, and activists to acquire Hebrew grew considerably. The war and its immediate outcomes forced German Jews who sympathized with Jewish nationalism to take on a more defensive position regarding their rootedness in German and inability to transmit their views in Hebrew.

Examining the disputes over the principal language of Zionist politics also allows us to uncover matters of partial communication and miscommunication. Although German played a key role in Jewish nationalism, levels of proficiency differed enormously. For some it was a native tongue; for others it was only partly accessible, if at all. The fact that Yiddish had a central



Germanic component in it was crucial in this regard, as it facilitated communication between Western and Eastern European Jews. Hebrew was key to the Zionist agenda, but it was only beginning to be used as a modern vernacular in Palestine, and it was not prevalent among most members of the movement. German's ubiquity in the Jewish national sphere thus generated tensions involving both pragmatic and ideological dimensions concerning the Jewish linguistic order. Taking a close look at language choices can tell us a great deal about latent hierarchies and divisions in the history of Jewish nationalism. This perspective adds nuance to the oft-idealized image of diaspora Jews as naturally skilled polyglots, moving freely between different languages. The linguistic choices of Jewish nationalists were often difficult ones. They involved renouncing one's eloquence in one language in return for a putative hope of being heard at all in another language. Linguistic proficiency was often determined by class, gender, political proclivities, and talent, a fact that also induced tensions within Jewish political circles.

The Jewish history of the German language adds an important dimension to our understanding of the history of modern Hebrew and its place in Jewish nationalism. As recent studies have shown, Jewish language activists and ideologues were deeply engaged with questions of how Hebrew's status as an ancient, holy language should be integrated into modern Hebrew.<sup>25</sup> Those seeking to promote and expand modern Hebrew turned to the linguistic and lexicographic resources of various languages, from Russian to Yiddish, Arabic, French, and English. A more delicate interaction, however, occurred with regard to the question of Hebrew's religious overtones. The Hebrew used by maskilim (proponents of the Haskalah) and Jewish nationalists in the 1870s and 1880s was steeped in patterns of religious and messianic rhetoric. When early Jewish nationalists used German, however, they could more handily employ the vocabulary of European national movements, adopting features of scientific and philosophical thought.<sup>26</sup> In the early decades of Jewish nationalist activism, this tendency created tensions over whether Jewish national thought evolves and operates differently when uttered in Hebrew and in German.

At the same time, German was more than just a scientific, secular tongue. It was also associated widely with Christianity (especially Protestantism), with the figure of Martin Luther, and with his translation of the Bible into

German. The very idea of German as a high, “proper” language—against which Yiddish was a mere deviation—was an ideological construct that acquired traction with the rise of German nationalism. Jewish nationalists such as Simon Bernfeld and Martin Buber dwelled in their writings and translations on how Hebrew religious poetics could be conveyed in German. Other Jewish nationalists were captivated by the place of German in the history of the Reformation and in the unification of Germany. Perets Smolenskin, for example, reflected on the ways in which Jews could learn from the prestigious German model without plummeting to the position of cultural inferiority. This question became more fraught in the 1880s and 1890s, when German became a tool of antisemitic agitation.<sup>27</sup> This book examines, then, Jewish secularization—in the sense of the neutralization of religious sensitivities, terms, and categories—in its multilingual and not merely Hebraic contexts.

### Linguistic Territories

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the heyday of German’s status as a world language of science and politics.<sup>28</sup> Not only in Germany, but also in Austria-Hungary’s urban centers and beyond, German served as a major language of communication for educated men and women. However, after 1871 German was also the language of the German nation-state. One of the major questions preoccupying German intellectuals and politicians was how to retain the vision of a greater German “cultural realm” in a reality in which German sovereignty was territorially confined. The idea that German speakers and German education systems were outposts of the German nation and “bulwarks of language preservation” featured in the German political culture of that time.<sup>29</sup> In Austria-Hungary, where German was the language of the imperial administration but also of ethnic-German nationalists, quarrels over the language of education and administration in borderlands and other demographically mixed areas turned into heated and even violent clashes between ethnic Germans and Czech, Hungarian, and other national groups.<sup>30</sup> Whether German was the language of German nationalism or of universal knowledge was thus a matter of perspective.

These political tensions affected the history of Jews in profound ways. As nationalist categories became central in European political cultures, Jews were compelled to engage more directly with the question of which language

could be considered their “national language” and what this would imply for other languages they were using. The answers to these questions were never simple or straightforward, and Jews took different positions in these debates. Some advocated for the acknowledgment of Yiddish as a language of the Jewish national minority; others sided with another ethnic group’s demands for national rights; still others preferred to remain uninvolved in ethnic disputes, albeit often finding themselves subject to reproach for being affiliated with the Germans, as was the case for Jews in Prague and Budapest, for instance. Language choice turned, then, into a highly politicized issue that left its imprint on the shape that Jewish nationalist ideas took during these years.<sup>31</sup>

The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century also witnessed an unprecedented wave of Jewish mass emigration westward. The spike in the number of Eastern European Jews settling in German-speaking cities created various ways in which German’s international status merged with the transformation of Jewish societies. For different strata of Jewish societies—students, workers, political activists, and intellectuals—German facilitated social integration and served as a means of communication across borders.

The subject of this book, then, is the place of German in Jewish nationalism, but that place cannot be easily pinpointed. I follow the appearance of German in the major debates of the period, but also in forgotten writings and exchanges between Jewish activists, scholars, and thinkers who analyzed the multilingual quality of the Jewish national sphere. By dint of its loaded meanings in Jewish history, the German language had a haunting presence—well before the rise of National Socialism—that cannot be properly understood by focusing on a single individual, country, or a short period. This book therefore follows the channels of communication in and around German across geographical, temporal, and linguistic boundaries.<sup>32</sup> It sets out to de-Germanize the place of German in modern Jewish history, to study its diffused presence in Jewish societies across borders and outside German-speaking realms.<sup>33</sup>

A nonterritorial approach allows us to trace the persistence of Jews’ diasporic, multilingual experience in an era in which the equation of nation, language, and ethnicity was central to the dominant political idiom.<sup>34</sup> Not clinging to strict boundaries is also beneficial given the transnational development

of Jewish nationalism. Historians of Zionism often focus on Palestine as a singular “laboratory” of nation making, or on Jewish local nationalist circles in the diaspora.<sup>35</sup> The scholarly merit of such studies is beyond dispute, but some questions warrant a different path. Exploring the meanings of German in Jewish politics requires us to look at the international character of Jewish nationalism, at how Jews in Jerusalem, Berlin, Vienna, and Odessa interacted with one another, directly or indirectly. The world that Jewish immigrants to Palestine “left behind” was very much present in their new political and cultural preoccupations.<sup>36</sup> Both in practice and as a symbolic reference point, German was an important component with which Jewish nationalists grappled in their attempt to define and realize their ideas.

Finally, the scope of this book makes it possible to reexamine common perceptions about modern Jewish intellectual history. Much of the literature on the German language and its place in Jewish culture focuses on key writers and intellectuals for whom German was a native language.<sup>37</sup> This book is immensely indebted to these works, and members of the twentieth-century German Jewish canon are not absent from it. However, my intention is to show that their relationship with German reflected a broader set of political questions that Jews had confronted since the late nineteenth century. Kafka’s famous comments on German Jewish writers’ four “linguistic impossibilities”—“the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing German, the impossibility of writing differently . . . [and the] impossibility of writing”<sup>38</sup>—have earned considerable attention from literary scholars. But his words do not only offer a glimpse into the condition of German Jewish writers; they attest to a fundamental problem for members of a multilingual minority in the age of nationalism, whereby each language choice had weighty consequences.

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The Jewish history of the German language reveals a multitude of ways in which German was more than a language. In different periods and contexts, Jewish nationalists learned it and unlearned it, idealized it and fought against it, used it and boycotted it. Different factors informed the attitudes of Jewish nationalists to the German language: the rise of socialist and revolutionary politics, Germany’s rapidly shifting geopolitical power in world diplomacy,

and broader political developments in Europe and the Middle East. Biographical factors such as educational background, linguistic skills and habits, as well as geographical proximity to German-speaking lands likewise influenced Jewish nationalists' views of German and its political significance. German was thus a Jewish problem, but the nature of that problem was subject to dispute, reflecting the key dilemmas and divisions of Jewish nationalism.

## JEWS AND GERMAN SINCE THE ENLIGHTENMENT

For centuries, Jewish Ashkenazi communities were multilingual environments in which Yiddish served as a vernacular and Hebrew served as the language of religious ritual and writing. Jews often used other languages from their surroundings with varying degrees of proficiency. This status quo was eroded and sometimes disrupted by the rise of the absolutist state, the emergence of Enlightenment discourses, the French Revolution, and a series of technological, economic, and demographic shifts since the late eighteenth century. Whether Jews began adopting the dominant language of the land as their main language or alongside Jewish vernaculars, this linguistic shift facilitated the entry of Jews—as individuals and as a social group—into the political and discursive realm of the state. The language question is therefore a useful barometer for tracing broader transformations in Jewish societies.<sup>1</sup>

German was one of the languages—numerically not the most central one—that permeated the Jewish world and became a signifier of social change. However, its significance in modern Jewish history goes further. The coalescence of certain political, cultural, and religious contexts in which the introduction of German took place added to its status several layers of meaning and turned it into an emblematic signifier of key sensitivities and paradoxes of Jewish history. In what follows, I sketch five trajectories, each of which constitutes an added meaning attached to German that rendered it

more than a tool of communication. These layers of meaning would leave a deep imprint on the history of Jewish nationalism.

### The Language Questions of the German Jewish Enlightenment

In the early modern period, German Jewry did not differ fundamentally from Jewish communities in the neighboring Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in terms of their religious and linguistic characteristics.<sup>2</sup> Between 1772 and 1795 the commonwealth was partitioned between Russia, Prussia, and the Habsburg Empire, and it ceased to exist as a political entity. Tsarist Russia, which had scarcely any Jews until then, became the country with the largest Jewish population in the world. As Western European countries underwent rapid political changes, which involved debates on Jewish modernization and emancipation, Russian Jews were to live under very different conditions. It was in particular the state reforms and Enlightenment thought in Prussia and the Habsburg Empire that made those regions more central to the discourse of Jewish modernization. Over several decades, ideologues of the German Jewish Enlightenment (or *Haskalah*) emerged as the chief voice calling for the transformation of Jews and Judaism. The German language would serve as a crucial driving force in this process.

The German Jewish Enlightenment in Berlin arose under Frederick the Great, who reigned between 1740 and 1786. He was deeply influenced by the French Enlightenment, and his attitude toward French language and culture was more positive than it was toward German. As an “enlightened absolutist,” Frederick the Great endorsed values of high culture, social refinement, religious tolerance, scientific progress, and cultural exchange. During his reign, ideas of Jewish acculturation into German society were debated in Prussian political and intellectual milieus, even if Prussian policies were at best ambivalent regarding the civic emancipation of the Jews.<sup>3</sup>

A circle of German Jewish proponents of the Enlightenment participated in a fraught debate concerning the ways in which Jews’ religious mores could be transformed. It was a small but influential group that aimed to be the voice of reason and progress for Jews in Germany and beyond. This circle’s chief intellectual authority was Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), whose central role in philosophical and theological debates in Berlin during these decades was acknowledged by prominent figures such as Immanuel Kant and



Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Mendelssohn's native tongue was Yiddish, but he adopted German and wrote most of his work in it. His views regarding the need to render Jews equal members of society were based on the ideas that Judaism and universal reason were ultimately compatible, and that it was high time that the social separation of Jews became a thing of the past—both for the sake of Jews and for humanity as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

According to the early Berlin Haskalah, for Jews to achieve a higher level of civility and to acquire the values of Enlightenment, they would have to desert Yiddish in favor of German. The German Haskalah's demand to acquire German was aligned with a broader political effort pursued by German principalities to set German as a cultural and administrative language, but it also drew heavily on the distinct place of Yiddish in Germany. Historically a medieval Germanic language with influences from other languages and written in the Hebrew alphabet, Yiddish had been the subject of fascination and suspicion among Germans—especially churchmen and theologians—throughout the early modern period.<sup>5</sup> Prevalent ideas about the seclusion of Jewish communities, combined with those communities' adherence to Jewish languages of prayer and everyday life, fueled a discourse concerning a Jewish "hidden language," as Sander Gilman put it.<sup>6</sup> The German Haskalah likewise endorsed the view that, for Jews to integrate into wider society, they needed to distance themselves from certain traditional features of Jewish communal life in Eastern Europe. Yiddish had to be done away with.

For Mendelssohn, the main problem with Yiddish was its hybridity, the fact that it was a mixture of Hebrew, German, and Slavic elements. In tune with his contemporaries' engagement with ideas of "pure" languages, Mendelssohn conceived of Yiddish as the opposite of a proper language.<sup>7</sup> It represented for him the vices of the Jewish condition; namely, it was a backward, secluded language.<sup>8</sup> His endorsement of German was also rooted in contemporary Franco-German rivalry. German thinkers and writers were concerned about the perplexing language ideology of Frederick the Great, who encouraged the promotion of German culture while venerating French and using it exclusively in his court. Mendelssohn lamented the French language's ubiquity in German life and saw his work as contributing to the consolidation of German as the language of Germans—Jews and non-Jews alike. Mendelssohn's advancement of German thus did not pertain merely to its function of

integrating Jews into modern society, but it was part of a broader current in eighteenth-century Prussia.<sup>9</sup>

Already in his lifetime, contemporaries saw Mendelssohn as a remarkable figure who adopted the ideals of Enlightenment and fused them with his Jewish faith. The fact that he preferred to write most of his work in German was telling in this regard and became a matter of controversy among his opponents and supporters. Mendelssohn rarely took an active stance on the issue, yet some of his fellow “ideologues of emancipation”—as historian David Sorkin called them—employed a more outspoken stance for German and against Yiddish.<sup>10</sup> Naphtali Hirz Wessely, for instance, advocated bilingual education in Hebrew and German, arguing, “Why should we stop our sons from learning the Bible in the pure and clean language of Ashkenaz, which would be one of the two languages learned thoroughly?”<sup>11</sup>

A widespread view among proponents of Jewish Enlightenment in its formative decades, then, was that a respectable Jewish member of society should know German and Hebrew—and know them well. As a vehicle to rendering the Bible clearer and more accessible to fellow Jews, Mendelssohn began publishing in the late 1770s a translation of the Pentateuch into German using the Hebrew alphabet (entitled *Sefer netivot ha-shalom*, or *Book of Paths to Peace*), accompanied by a commentary (*Be’ur*) that reflected his rationalist attitude to the Scripture (fig. 1).<sup>12</sup> The translation quickly became a classic in Germany and in Eastern Europe. Mendelssohn saw his translation as a tribute to the holy text and as proof of its relevance to Jewish life at present. Moreover, he hoped the translation would serve Jews as “the first step toward culture,” as he noted in a personal correspondence.<sup>13</sup> By maintaining the Hebrew letters while writing in proper German, Yiddish-speaking Jews reading the Bible and the *Be’ur* were introduced to the German language while the Hebrew alphabet helped maintain some of the aura of the biblical text and its visual splendor.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, Mendelssohn and his circle sought to revitalize Hebrew, the Holy Tongue. Along with the adaptation of Jews to the political and moral imperatives of the time, Hebrew, according to the Berlin Has-kalah, had to become a Jewish *Kultursprache*, a cornerstone in the universal process of Enlightenment. The call to bring the Hebrew language to non-religious realms and to give it a role in the writing of literature and science

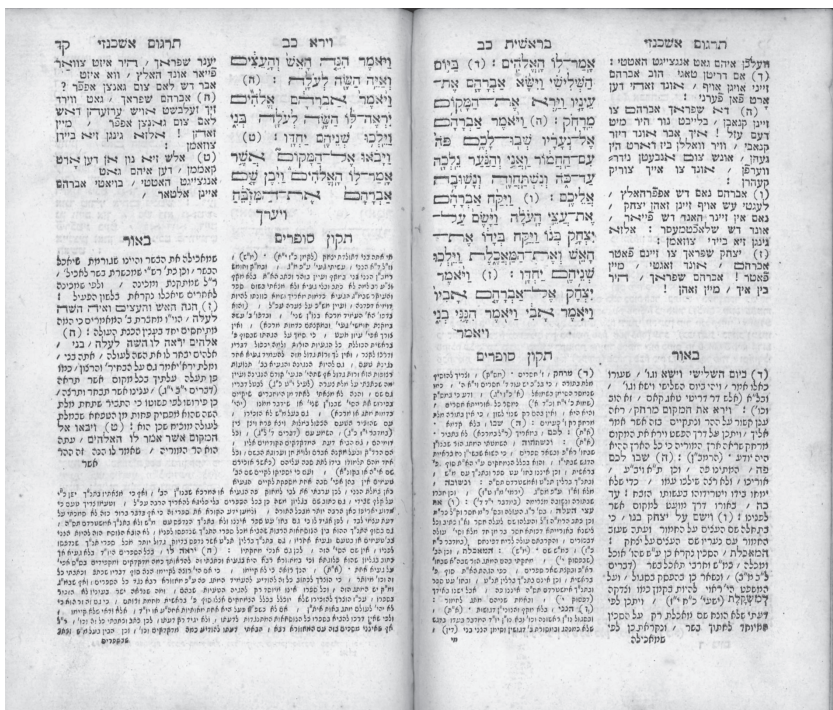


FIGURE 1. Moses Mendelssohn's translation of Genesis 22: *Sefer Nivtoot Ha-Shalom*, 1783. Photograph courtesy of the National Library of Israel.

was unprecedented in its pronounced ambition to reshape Jewish linguistic practices. In 1784, the Hebrew journal *Ha-Me'asef* was launched; it appeared for twenty-seven years and would be remembered as a landmark in the secularization and modernization of the Hebrew language. Yet the editors of the journal also chose to include supplements in German and encouraged the acquisition of German as a rich, universal, and useful language.<sup>15</sup>

Critics of Mendelssohn were concerned about how German might disrupt the sacredness of the Hebrew language. In 1786, Yehezkel Landau, the chief rabbi of Prague, condemned Mendelssohn's translation, deeming it a vehicle to learning German, a degradation of the holy language. In Mendelssohn's work, Landau wrote, "the holy and the profane were joined together."<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere, Landau wrote that learning German, though beneficial for Jews' social and economic condition, must be done with the highest caution, for it could also lead to heresy: "Take great care, you pious Jews, lest the study of

the German language lead you to read other books that are of no benefit in studying language, but that only delve into questions of faith and Torah, and by doing so, God forbid, plant doubts in your hearts as to faith.”<sup>17</sup> In response to Orthodox rabbinical critics of Mendelssohn’s translation, David Friedländer, a staunch defender of the Jewish Enlightenment, blamed them for using obscure, imprecise language. These problematic practices, he contended, could be countered only by using a pure language, whether Hebrew or German. He translated some of the rabbinical critiques into German in order to demonstrate that their style negated principles of clarity and reason.<sup>18</sup>

The German Haskalah’s intellectual enterprise involved, then, a persistent duality. It defended the legitimacy of Judaism in the age of Enlightenment, but it also sought to reform it. The dual legacy of Mendelssohn as a defender and reformer of Jewish tradition remained a subject of debate among Jewish thinkers for the following 250 years.<sup>19</sup> This duality was encapsulated in the language question: the German Haskalah fueled the renewal of Hebrew culture and language while endorsing views regarding German’s supreme value and pureness. And not only did German enter into the realm of the sacred; this process transpired while Jews gradually entered the realm of the state. The immediate political impact of the German Haskalah was rather limited, but its cultural agenda became part and parcel of the ethos associated with modern German Jewry. The duality also pertained to the image of Yiddish. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century Hebraists could find inspiration in the Berlin Haskalah’s degradation of Yiddish, yet the critique by the latter of Yiddish was entangled with a positive attitude toward German. This entanglement was to become of crucial importance in modern Jewish history. The entry of German into Jewish life destabilized Jewish linguistic and religious order. The role of Hebrew as the language of only religious work was challenged, the role of Yiddish as a vernacular was undermined, and it was German that came to stand for the promise of the Enlightenment.

### German Linguistic Romanticism and Its Jewish Strains

The end of the eighteenth century witnessed the emergence of the Enlightenment’s two main countercurrents. The first was Romanticism, which questioned the firm belief in human reason and empirical methods of inquiry, ex-

ploring instead realms of individual inwardness, spirituality, and subjectivity. The other was nationalist thought, which rejected the universalist premises of the Enlightenment, emphasizing in its stead the unique traits, historical development, and intrinsic values of the nation. One of the realms in which early nationalism and Romanticism met was around the emphasis on language, whether at the individual or at the collective level, as a vehicle of authentic expression.<sup>20</sup>

A background against which such intellectual currents took shape was the French Revolution and the ensuing Napoleonic Wars, which led to enhanced political and philosophical engagement with ideas of national belonging and universalist principles.<sup>21</sup> Discussions of the historical and spiritual meaning of language to nations occupied an important role in this context. A widespread understanding of language saw it as a primary evidence of the common descent of modern nations, a reflection of their shared ethnic roots.<sup>22</sup> The thinker associated most prominently with the emergence of this view was Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803). The *Volk*, for Herder, was the definitive unit of human existence and creativity, and therefore the source and telos of culture.<sup>23</sup> Herder held that language was not a reflection of thought, nor was it autonomous of historical conditions. Rather, each language shapes thought in its own particular way. Different languages in different places and times determine the scope and potentialities of the thought that can be expressed in that language. Moreover, Herder argued that language holds within it the spirit and values of a nation, and also preserves a direct tie with the nation's past and founding myths.<sup>24</sup> The premise was that language embodies history. It “contains” the past of those speaking it, even if parts of that past are prone to oblivion.<sup>25</sup>

On the one hand, this view acknowledged the diversity of cultures, languages, and nations, as well as the uniqueness of each, thus propagating cosmopolitan assumptions. On the other hand, inquiring into the distinctiveness of each language also opened up the possibility of a qualitative and hierarchical examination of languages. Herder's championing of a comparative view of national cultures led him to argue for the German language's superiority over other languages.<sup>26</sup> He encouraged an investigation of German traditions by analyzing its language, literature, and folklore to unearth the

nation's singularity. His philosophy of language and his engagement in the exploration of the German *Volk* and the *Volksgeist* (national spirit) made him a crucial figure in the formation of German nationalist thought.<sup>27</sup>

If Herder laid the philosophical groundwork for examining the relation between languages and nations, Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) gave it a philological framework. Humboldt held that the character and structure of a language reflect the inner life and knowledge of its speakers, as well as the worldview of the society to which they belong. Humboldt brought the linguistic sciences into a broader historical-cultural framework that exceeded the analysis of words and syntactical structures. He saw language as an “organic entity” that is dynamic and prone to change, evolution, and decay.<sup>28</sup> Humboldt compared the difference between a spoken language and the sum of its words and rules to the difference between a living system and a “dead skeleton.”<sup>29</sup> Although he was influenced by Herder, Humboldt's political attitude was more liberal. He conducted comparative studies of languages and cultures, and in 1820 introduced the discipline of comparative linguistics at the University of Berlin. This was a major step in Germany's becoming the global center of philological studies.

The philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) gave the tie between German national spirit and language a more radical form. In his 1808 *Addresses to the German Nation*, written during the French occupation of German principalities, Fichte not only stressed the importance of language in understanding a nation; he focused on the *German* language, the *German* nation, and its distinct virtues. In his view, the merit of the German language over others stemmed from the fact that the German people had remained in their earliest areas of settlement, without integrating other languages and cultures. This, according to Fichte, gave Germans the privilege of retaining the original meaning of words since the time of their very creation, namely the moment when they were set forth to define the thing in itself. The German language preserved its authentic core, which, according to Fichte, other Teutonic languages had already lost.

The equation between the German language and the German people was thus central to early German nationalism. In this constellation, the stranger who did not belong to the ethno-linguistic community lacked the “authentic” traits of Germanness. This postulate made the distinction between Germans



and Jews of decisive importance in German nationalism.<sup>30</sup> As Shulamit Volkov has argued, the question of language served in the nineteenth century as a site of interaction and tension between Jews and non-Jews. The command of German and the assumed emotional relation to it was often invoked to approve or reject Jews' belonging to the German nation.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the shift toward a cultural-ethnic understanding of nationhood, ideas of cosmopolitanism, *Bildung* (moral and cultural self-cultivation), and Enlightenment also informed German nationalist thought. The issue of translation may serve as a case in point. André Lefevere has explored a distinct German tradition of thinking about translation, which goes back to Luther's translation of the Bible. According to this trope, translations into German were a vehicle for national growth, and the German language, consequently, should develop through the absorption of great literature and philosophy from different cultures.<sup>32</sup> The philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher translated a variety of texts and explained how it was the ethical and national duty of the writer to engage in the production but also in the translation—or rewriting—of literature so as to enrich the German language and the German *Geist*.<sup>33</sup> The practice of translation was thus imbued with political and spiritual growth as German was becoming a universal *Kultursprache*.

German Romantic nationalism influenced political movements outside of German-speaking lands as well. It provided nationalists, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, with a logic and vocabulary that enabled them to define the real or imagined boundaries of the nation.<sup>34</sup> As we will see in the next chapters, language would continue to play an important role in national movements in the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. However, ideas of shared ethnicity and political self-government would increasingly serve as the main arguments for national self-determination across Europe. The poet Ernst Moritz Arndt's musing from 1813 that the German fatherland lies not in a specific place but rather extends "as far as the German tongue sounds" would lose much of its resonance in the territorially confined German nation-state.

Concurrent intellectual shifts further diminished the premises of linguistic Romanticism. Socialism's materialist critique of language sought to reveal how language was dictated by economic structures and how it could obfuscate social reality. Nietzsche's philosophy, deeply rooted in his academic



training as a philologist, captivated generations of readers with the ideas that language distorts thought and that language was in itself a metaphor. The late nineteenth century also witnessed the rise of psychoanalysis, which saw language as suppressing passions and denying memories, sexual desires, and conflicts. The idea of language as carrying an aura of authenticity, a pure reflection of thought, of a people, or of history, was challenged on multiple grounds. After the emergence of a “hermeneutics of suspicion,” as Paul Ricoeur called it, language could no longer be seen as a vehicle to express truth.<sup>35</sup>

An example of the way in which German linguistic Romanticism—in its rise and in its fall—was tied with the Jewish political condition is the case of Heymann (Chajim) Steinthal (1823–1899). Originally from Saxony-Anhalt, Steinthal acquired academic training in Tübingen and Berlin, where he taught from 1856. He did not receive a permanent academic position because of his Jewish origin. As a scholar, Steinthal played an important role in spurring renewed interest in Humboldt, and he published in 1884 an annotated volume of Humboldt’s linguistic-philosophical texts. In the preface, he wrote, “My respect for this thinker has always been greater than my criticisms, and even greater than my respect was my love for him.”<sup>36</sup> Steinthal worked at the seminary Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums since its establishment in 1872, teaching philosophy, religion, philology, and linguistics. He was most famous for founding, in 1860, together with his intellectual ally (and brother-in-law) Moritz Lazarus the *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*. This journal was the central platform of the fairly young discipline of *Völkerpsychologie*, which sought to examine human cultures through an integrative study of language, mythology, folklore, and rituals, thus tracing the dynamic relationship between language and *Volksgeist* as well as the modes of interaction between the individual and the collective.

*Völkerpsychologie* echoed Herder and Humboldt in its focus on the category of the *Volk* and *Volksgeist*, as well as in its comparative approach. It also reflected the soaring national consciousness in Germany following the uprising of 1848.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, by focusing on the dynamics and culture of a people as it is practiced, the element of ethnic or racial origins was marginalized, if not dismissed altogether. Steinthal emphasized human instinct and the unconscious as shaping the form which cultures and subjectivities take.

As the historian Tuska Benes put it, the nation in Steinthal's view was "a discursive community united by a self-conscious process of identification."<sup>38</sup>

In his essays, Steinthal promoted the idea that the founding narrative of Jewish monotheism served as a fine example for studying the evolution of language. Supporting this claim were the ideas that God's creation of the universe was an act of linguistic creation and that the prophets transmitted the divine message to the entire humanity. Although Steinthal underscored Jews' distinct traits, he perceived them not as a separate *Volk* but primarily as a religion that propagates universal values of humanism. In his view, language should not be used to question the belonging of Jews to the German *Volk*. On the contrary, language constitutes to a large degree their German self-understanding: "We are Germans because this is the language through which we have matured in our thinking, with which we were nourished by German poets. . . . It is impossible for us not to be Germans."<sup>39</sup> Steinthal's case presents us with a suggestive paradox: he was deeply immersed in notions of Herderian and Humboldtian linguistic Romanticism, although his work likewise reflected the transformation and decline of these ideas. By tackling and critiquing the ethnic premises of linguistic Romanticism he undermined its potency in scientific discourse. Not for nothing do historians discuss *Völk-erpsychologie* as part of the intellectual context in which Nietzschean, psycho-analytical, and other critiques of language emerged.<sup>40</sup>

Linguistic and philological discourses, then, went hand in hand with the formation of German nationalist thought, a legacy that left its mark on other national movements in Europe, including the Jewish one. Jewish nationalism did not have the territorial base that other national movements had at their disposal and was therefore more prone to mobilizing ethno-linguistic arguments. The conceptual repository of linguistic Romanticism continued to inform different strands of Jewish political thought and thus had a constant, if elusive, presence in the formation of Jewish nationalism, as we will see throughout this book.

### German as a Scientific Language and the Challenge of Jewish Particularism

Alongside its role in German nationalist thought, the status of German rose during the nineteenth century to that of a universal language, serving as a

central medium for communication in the fields of science, culture, and politics. This process largely had to do with a gradual increase of prestige of German academic and literary productivity. Already in the seventeenth century, the philosophers Christian Wolff and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz had commented on the need to make German more uniform and less ponderous, and to elevate its status in the realms of philosophy and science. Prussian kings pushed this agenda in the following century. In 1806, a state reform defined the vocation of German education as the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. The University of Berlin, established in 1810, valorized ideals of impartial, research-based scholarship. The philosophical and literary achievements of German writers as well as the rise of German universities rendered German a universal scientific and philosophical language alongside French and English. German universities were also the main provider of personnel to the expanding state institutions. The rise of scientific work and the strengthening of the German states were thus closely linked.<sup>41</sup>

The linguistic and social transformation of German Jewry coincided with the consolidation of German as a universal language. Ideologues of Jewish emancipation grounded the call for the introduction of German into Jewish life mainly on the need to make Jews part of German society, yet this pragmatic reasoning was embedded in the reputation of German as a vivid, rich, scientific, and “pure” language.<sup>42</sup> The Jewish movement most associated with this set of imperatives was the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (“Science of Judaism”). It began as a small group of intellectuals who sought to bring the values of impartial scholarly inquiry into the study of Judaism.<sup>43</sup> In 1823 the group founded the *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, the first scientific journal in the German language dealing with Jewish history and culture. The work of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* challenged rabbinical approaches to the study of Jewish sources but also the predominance of Christian perspectives in German scholarship. Researchers associating themselves with the movement highly valued German scholarly practices and aimed to bridge the gap between Jewish and non-Jewish scholarship, even if they remained outside German universities.

Though supportive of the Haskalah’s goal of enhancing the status of the Hebrew language, most of the work produced by the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholars was in German. Their work often included ideological

remarks pertaining to the primacy of German. Leopold Zunz, one of the founders of the movement, published in 1818 a programmatic essay, "Some Remarks on Rabbinical Literature," in which he justified the need to study traditional Jewish literature by the fact that it was losing its centrality among German Jews: "Since we observe the Jews in our time—and we refer not only to the Jews of Germany—turning in earnest to the German language and German culture, and thereby—perhaps unwillingly—carrying Jewish literature to its grave, *Wissenschaft* appears to demand an account of what has been sealed."<sup>44</sup> Zunz did not seem to lament the direction that Jewish history was taking or the role of the German language in that process. Heinrich Graetz, who wrote a tremendously successful multivolume history of the Jewish people, did not want to see a popular version of his work translated into Yiddish.<sup>45</sup> Zunz and Graetz concurred in the overt moral significance attached to the Jewish linguistic transformation and the inseparable tie between the acquisition of a respectable language such as German and the moral and social progress of Jews.

The extent to which Zunz's philological, objectivist attitude to the study of Judaism was entwined with his perception of the German language could be discerned by looking more closely at his study of the historical development of Jewish sermons, published in 1832.<sup>46</sup> Zunz described Jews in early medieval Germany as essentially speaking a German identical to that spoken by Christians. From the sixteenth century, according to Zunz, the German-Jewish dialect prevailing among Jews in Germany and Poland absorbed influences from Hebrew and other languages. While the German language—and society—transformed dramatically, the German spoken by Jews remained the same. This situation led to spiritual poverty among Jews, a group with limited access to knowledge and rooted in a mixed and outdated language. It was only in the middle of the eighteenth century that Europe, and especially Germany, shook off the "dust of Barbarism" and adopted a spirit of progress and toleration. This led to an awakening of the dormant forces of Judaism, appearing first and foremost in the work of Mendelssohn, who was to bring peace between Jews and Christians. The spirit of reform and revival that swept Judaism was fierce, and the traditional Jewish language could not stand up to it: "The Jewish-German dialect fled along with the Polish educators, the *Heders* ceased to exist, and rabbis no longer carried the

shame of ignorance." Through education and reform, Zunz noted, Judaism was to rebuild itself.<sup>47</sup>

Zunz ascribed great importance to the attempt to instill "the pure German language" into Jewish literature. He depicted Mendelssohn's German translation of the Bible as "a final deathblow, carried out hand-in-hand by the genius of the German language and the Hebrew language."<sup>48</sup> Zunz then cited several German-Jewish rabbis who expressed the hope that Mendelssohn's commentary on the Bible would "bring the hearts of the laymen closer to the German language, for it is a disgrace to Israel that its erudite people understand neither Hebrew nor German."<sup>49</sup> He described the German translations of the Bible and prayer books as part and parcel of the emancipation of German Jews. This "important progress," Zunz argued, was related to a strong connection between the development of science and reform in educational institutions. He described the desertion of Yiddish as bound up with the rise of a higher linguistic style of Hebrew, which pushed out the flawed one hitherto common.

After presenting the spirit of renewal and its outcomes, Zunz summarized his position: "But the light should not come from now on from Babylon, but from Germany—from our homeland, whose inhabitants carry in their hearts tolerance and diligence, reason and good will, in a wonderful fusion. Step by step, with the legal freedom and refinement of cultural forms, so progresses also the emancipation of the Jews, civil as well as spiritual."<sup>50</sup> Zunz's description of German Jewry's transformation is suggestive for several reasons. It mentions matter-of-factly the superiority of the German language over Yiddish, which appears unable to carry generative values of *Bildung*.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, Zunz adopted the idea that the invigoration of Hebrew was compatible with the parallel rising prestige of the German language in Jewish life. In this sense, he did not see any potential collision between the universal ethos of the Enlightenment, the cultural supremacy he attributed to German culture and language, and the revival of Hebrew scholarship. Indeed, in a later work, Zunz lauded the model of Jewish Sephardic acculturation into Arab culture under Islamic rule, as Jews adopted the Arabic language, giving rise to a thriving Jewish literature in Arabic that reflected the fruitful interaction between Jewish and world literatures.<sup>52</sup> In his discussion of German Jewry, Zunz did not tackle the aspired division of roles between German and

Hebrew and whether it could persist in an age of declining religious authority. His view of the German language and culture demonstrated the inner tension between *Wissenschaft* and *Judentum*.

Scholars of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* advanced the historical and scientific scrutiny of the Jewish past, aiming not only to give the study of Judaism an honorable place in historical writing but also to promote the cause of emancipation of German Jewry. While cherishing the value of the Hebrew language—and occasionally publishing in Hebrew<sup>53</sup>—the Holy Tongue remained more a subject matter than a medium. The historian David Myers has suggested that the members of *Wissenschaft* were paying homage to “the temple of *Wissenschaft*” while constantly succumbing to the tension between scholarly impartiality and Jewish transcendence.<sup>54</sup> One might add that the language spoken in that figurative temple was German.

In Eastern Europe, the scholarly study of Judaism—often called *hokhmat yisrael*—was inspired by the scholarly activities of German and German-Jewish scholars, yet its proponents took the language question in different directions. Although many of the maskilim could read German and valued its merits, they attached superior importance to rendering Hebrew a vivid language of scholarship and literary creativity.<sup>55</sup> Eastern European maskilim, like many of their Western counterparts, dismissed the value of Yiddish, seeing it as representing moral and political backwardness. At the same time, they used Yiddish extensively to reach wide audiences.<sup>56</sup>

An important difference between the two strands of Jewish studies concerns their social role. The maskilim in Eastern Europe saw the study of scientific and historical topics as constitutive of the Jewish public sphere, and they were less concerned with the academic discourse. Hoping to change mind-sets through work in popular circles, they disseminated, starting in the 1820s, progressive ideas and visions that would modernize Jewish communities. As the historian Mordechai Zalkin suggested: “In addition to functioning as ‘cultural producers,’ they played the crucial role of cultural mediators who made it possible for their readers to become acquainted with disciplines to which they had no other access on account of religious, cultural, and linguistic constraints.”<sup>57</sup> Most of their work in this realm was published in Hebrew, due to their ambition to broaden the scope of Hebrew language and culture.<sup>58</sup> The function of German was passive, and yet crucial, as it was

German texts that were most frequently translated, ranging from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to a manual on pediatric diseases. Serving as cultural mediators, maskilim's access to German was an essential feature of their work and a vehicle for spreading scholarly, secular knowledge.

Science and German formed thus a nexus in the history of European Jews in the nineteenth century. The *Wissenschaft des Judentums*' work was conceived in German, and its linguistic default became one of its defining features. The rhetoric it employed and the relation it perceived between German (the language of science and culture) and Hebrew (the object of research) tied its scholarly products, in the eyes of its critics, with German academic culture, German liberalism, and the withdrawal from—or even rejection of—Jewish religious law. The German language was of decisive importance in Eastern Europe as a pathway to nonreligious realms of knowledge, inspired by the reformist ideology of the German Haskalah. These symbolic and functional meanings would continue to inform the status of German in Jewish history and historiography.

### The Language of Religious Reform

The Berlin Haskalah had lost much of its stature by the 1790s, largely due to the overall waning of the Enlightenment and the rise of nationalism, Romanticism, and the centralized state.<sup>59</sup> In 1812, Prussia issued a decree that was unprecedented in its liberal approach to its Jewish population. The decree abolished special taxes and restrictions on Jewish trade, and also allowed Jews' partial entry to state administration and their recruitment to the Prussian army. It also forced them to choose a German last name and to manage their business in German or any other "living language."<sup>60</sup> In Bavaria, a decree published in 1813 marked the custody of Jewish religious life under the state authorities. All rabbis had to pass a state exam, to speak "fluent German," and to acquire academic training in general arts.<sup>61</sup>

Alongside the emancipatory policies advanced in Germany, it was the Habsburg Empire that provided the main model for emancipation from above, as developed by Emperor Joseph II.<sup>62</sup> The Edict of Toleration of 1782 forbade Jews from using Hebrew or Yiddish "in any public judicial or extrajudicial procedures."<sup>63</sup> According to the reforms introduced in different parts of the empire in the following years, German would be taught in

state-supervised Jewish schools, and Jews were allowed to attend universities. The reforms promulgated in German and Habsburg lands pushed Jews into the urban sphere, making the adoption of German evermore common. Jews in Bohemia were allowed to expand their enterprise and deal in commerce, thus accelerating geographical mobility. Some of these decrees were later revoked or only partially implemented, but they set in motion changes in the political culture and social prospects of Jews of that generation.<sup>64</sup> More and more Jewish communities adopted modern regulations in tune with religious and cultural norms. Jewish synagogues of various denominations sought to assume a more “respectable” character, and a growing number of synagogues introduced sermons in German. As Michael Meyer noted, this change was particularly controversial and caused a widening rift between different factions of German Jewry.<sup>65</sup> As German words were increasingly used in speech and song in the synagogues, the sacred status of Hebrew was challenged.

Moreover, German rabbis increasingly belonged to a younger generation that was academically educated and more integrated in German culture than its predecessor. For Jews in various parts of Europe, sermons in German were associated with a change of content, namely a stronger proclivity for liberalism and an ambition to adjust Jewish law to the mores of German society. Starting in the 1810s, dozens of attempts to translate and reform Jewish liturgy were made in Germany. The first major controversy followed the introduction of the 1819 Hamburg Temple prayer book, which adopted the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew, introduced organ and choral singing, and determined that the sermon and some of the prayers would be said in German. This was the first of a series of controversies around such attempts at religious reform.<sup>66</sup>

The question of language thus ran through various reforms initiated by communities, individuals, and the state, bringing to the surface fraught questions on Jewish ritual. German Jewish Orthodox and neo-Orthodox movements did not differ from other Jewish denominations in their endorsement of the German language, despite a more conservative approach to introducing linguistic changes in the prayer book. The neo-Orthodox rabbis Azriel Hildesheimer and Samson Raphael Hirsch wrote a plethora of works in German and did not see German as foreign to their religious practice. The



latter wrote with warmth on the attachment of German Jews to the German language.<sup>67</sup> Hirsch, like Mendelssohn, Zunz, and others, translated the Bible into German.<sup>68</sup> In 1861, the Orthodox Bible Institute distributed an affordable translation into German for “god-fearing” Jews (*gottesfürchtig*), thus reaffirming the status of German as a valid language of Jewish religious life.<sup>69</sup>

Yet it was Reform Judaism that was most closely associated with the attachment to the German language. At the 1845 Reform Rabbinical Conference in Frankfurt, Abraham Geiger, a prominent scholar and one of the founders of German Reform Judaism, said that, to him, “a German prayer strikes a deeper chord than a Hebrew prayer.”<sup>70</sup> In a programmatic essay written in 1860 on the necessity of reforming Jewish ritual, Geiger called for a partial translation of Jewish prayer (a compromise between the two languages, as he put it). In Geiger’s view, Hebrew was Judaism’s holy language, yet it was not a living language, and it was profoundly obsolete: “Our prayers were born under the influence of Eastern imagination that leans to depiction that is more sensorial than our sober thought can sustain.”<sup>71</sup> He then described the feeling of alienation amid the style and pathos that he and his fellow Jews were encountering when reading ancient Hebrew prayers. He believed that the prayers could do without those “excesses” (*Auswüchse*). The deeper concern, however, remained: “The language of our prayers is not our mother-tongue. Hebrew is no longer a living language and in our days it has even ceased to be the language of wisdom and a tool of expression of religious sentiments.” It continued to function as the language of knowledge long after falling into disuse, yet this realm was also, ultimately, to be taken by the new mother tongue adopted by Jews. And that new mother tongue, according to Geiger, did not remain merely “a transmitter of our mundane needs, but reaches the heights of the spirit and the depths of the soul. This is what happened with us as well, and we do not complain that we have become German in all of our thought and in our feelings, nor that our consciousness and being finds its expression in the German word.”<sup>72</sup> Geiger aimed to speak for an entire generation of German Jews. He did so with a combination of sorrow (for the fact that Jews lacked unmediated access to the Holy Tongue) and pride for belonging to a community with a vivid and rich language that represents both reason and religiosity. Moreover, Geiger fused the emotional argument (of religious experience) with the pragmatic argument (knowledge of German).

Sentiments such as Geiger's toward the German language and its significance for Jewish prayer, it is important to add, were not limited to German-speaking areas. German-Jewish immigrants who settled in the United States continued to use German not only at home but also in many cases as a language of sermon. David Einhorn, a German Rabbi who emigrated to the United States in 1855 and became a prominent figure of liberal Judaism, said in a sermon in 1879 that by severing Reform Judaism from the German spirit and the German language—"which are but the same," it would be torn from its native soil and would wilt.<sup>73</sup> As Eli Lederhendler has noted, this attachment to German culture persisted in the case of Einhorn and others even as they set down deep roots in American culture.<sup>74</sup> German had a long and profound impact on American Jewish life, only to be gradually marginalized with generational shifts and with the waves of immigrants from Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. These gave rise to the adoption of English as the language of sermon. The surge of antisemitism in Germany during the 1870s and 1880s also made it harder for American Jews to defend the legitimacy of the German language. As one rabbi put it in 1882, "The language of the German anti-Semite Adolf Stoecker has no place in the American synagogue."<sup>75</sup>

The Habsburg region of Galicia provides another telling example of the loaded status of the German language, albeit for different reasons. Populated both by traditional Jews as well as by radical circles of maskilim, nineteenth-century Galicia witnessed the rise of opposing currents. Parts of the Galician Haskalah openly endorsed the promulgation of German language and culture in Jewish society.<sup>76</sup> The Habsburg Empire, for its part, saw this progressive segment in Jewish communities as a vehicle for disseminating German culture and fighting Polish nationalism.<sup>77</sup> The introduction of German language into educational and religious institutions based on the German Reform model took place in numerous cities in the Habsburg Empire, such as Lemberg, Budapest, and Prague. German was often used remonstratively by maskilim to indicate their radicalness and was seen by the Orthodox as a sly carrier of "foreign ideas." In a quarrel in 1816, several rabbis declared a boycott (*herem*) on maskilim from Tarnopol and Brody who taught the Bible using Mendelssohn's translation and on others who had started learning the German language.<sup>78</sup>

Viennese Jews, strongly affected by the Josephine Reforms as well as by the German Jewish discourse in Berlin, reformed religious ritual extensively. Rabbis such as Isaak Noah Mannheimer and Adolf Jellinek promoted the reform of sermons and of the synagogues' outlook, and praised German culture.<sup>79</sup> After the national upheavals in 1848–1849, it was quite common among Habsburg Jews to identify with the national cause of the ethnic group among whom they lived, as in the case of Czech and Hungarian areas, while maintaining German as a second language of communication and self-identification.<sup>80</sup> In 1848, Jellinek proclaimed: “The Jews are German in Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, Galicia, Moravia, and Silesia. In countries where the population is mixed, Jews represent the German language, they are the carriers of *Kultur*, *Bildung*, and *Wissenschaft*.”<sup>81</sup> These words were also directed toward ethnic Germans who lived in these areas, to whom Jellinek assured that cooperating with Jews would serve both populations. Granted, Jellinek's proclamation is overstated considering the far more diverse linguistic and ideological dispositions of Jews in various parts of the empire. Nonetheless, it reflected the allure of German liberal discourse that promised Jews a high degree of cultural autonomy along with civil equality and integration. In this context, the German language was an indispensable vehicle of reform.

Hungary is the foremost example of a Jewish community producing and consuming literature and press in the German language. Hungarian Jewish religious and political leaders often mediated between the Viennese center of Jewish Reform and the rest of the empire. By 1880, Hungary had the largest German-speaking Jewish community in Europe. For most Hungarian Jews, however, German was a second language.<sup>82</sup> The national and linguistic differences in the empire led to conflicts along class and ethnic divisions. In Moravia, for instance, Czech and Slovak peasants perceived Jews who were associated with German language and culture as part of the exploiting German middle class.<sup>83</sup>

The unification of Germany in 1871 crystalized the differences between the case of Jews in Imperial Germany and those in Austria-Hungary. The framework of a cultural and ethno-national entity under centralized territorial sovereignty was different from the framework of a multinational empire.<sup>84</sup> As a mostly urban, diasporic, and multilingual minority, Jews fit well into the framework of the multiethnic empire—however imperfect—and

specifically to Austria-Hungary, which proclaimed principles of Enlightenment.<sup>85</sup> Many of the adherents of the Jewish ideology of emancipation in Germany and in the urban centers of the Habsburg Empire saw German culture as embodying a broader idea of European civilization, humanism, and equality, and, consequently, as bringing to bear the spirit of universal reason. It was precisely this understanding of German culture as cosmopolitan and liberal that often appealed to Jews as transcending exclusivist perceptions of nationhood.<sup>86</sup>

German exerted certain symbolic power also in areas in which it was not a majority language and did not serve any role as an administrative language. In nineteenth-century Congress Poland (which belonged to the Russian Empire), a milieu of Jewish reformists drew on the models of Berlin and Posen and followed in synagogues German texts and rituals. In certain synagogues in Lodz, Warsaw, and Kalisz the language of sermon was German.<sup>87</sup> The use of German in Poland was often perceived as a contentious act. According to one commentator writing for the Polish Jewish newspaper *Izraelita* in 1880, those who spoke German in public gave it a “sacred” status that added to its prevalence in commerce and industry.<sup>88</sup>

In other areas of the Russian Empire, early proponents of the Haskalah sought to reform the Jewish community, release it from its seclusion, and fight traditional authorities. Additionally, Russian maskilim worked to strengthen their position in the empire without undermining the Tsar’s authority. The language question was closely tied up with the Haskalah’s agenda: acquiring Russian and additional languages would elevate the social and cultural condition of Jews as a community and as subjects of the empire.<sup>89</sup> As Israel Bartal has noted, Eastern European maskilim did not simply want Jews to integrate into non-Jewish society; they wanted them to adjust their cultural and social mores to the present age. Given the relatively low degree of interaction between Jews and Russian or Polish cultures, the German vision of a modernized European worldview remained the main model of progress and reform among the maskilim in the Russian Empire.<sup>90</sup> It is important to note that for the Haskalah—and its opponents—various languages could possibly serve as a path for reform, be it French, Russian, English, or German. However, German not only was culturally esteemed but also more accessible than other languages to Yiddish speakers.<sup>91</sup>

Moreover, the values of the Enlightenment and the image of German culture served as a model of progressive thought and of values into which Jews could fit. Not for nothing were the maskilim labeled by their opponents as “Berliners” and “Germans” (*daytshn*).<sup>92</sup> An apt illustration of the connection between Haskalah and the German language appeared in an autobiographical text by the maskil Avraham Ber Gottlob (1811–1899), who was born in Russia and spent most of his adolescent life in various cities in Central and Eastern Europe. He described his strong desire, at the age of nineteen, to go to Germany and “acquire wisdom that invigorates its owner. For I have already learned the German language well and have decided to live under its shadow, since the path to knowledge was closed for my people.”<sup>93</sup> Yeshaya Heshl Perelstein, who grew up in a traditional family in Poland, wrote in his memoir about a crisis of belief as a teenager, followed by an inner need to explore his doubts regarding the meaning and purpose of his religious life. The first step he took was to learn German.<sup>94</sup> The Russian Jew Pauline Wengeroff (1833–1916) described in her (German-language) memoir the reading habits of young Jews in mid-nineteenth-century Brest-Litovsk: “The men studied Schiller by heart; so did we young girls, and soon Schiller was an indispensable part of the curriculum of the cultured Jew: he studied Talmud and Schiller—indeed, the latter with the same method as Talmud. Each important verse was dissected individually and debated loudly; questions and possible answers followed one another and were discussed until a satisfying solution and the profound meaning that was said to lie behind the words was found.”<sup>95</sup>

Wengeroff’s depiction of Jewish men and women’s Talmudic devouring of Schiller’s poetry should give us pause. She belonged to a milieu of educated, traditional, well-to-do Russian Jews, and she wrote with much nostalgia for the vanishing world of Eastern European Jewish traditionalism. Yet she was also immersed in European culture, a fact reflected in her decision to publish her memoirs in German (fig. 2).<sup>96</sup> Even if Wengeroff’s description of young Jews is somewhat idealized, it attests to the fluid character of notions of sanctity and reverence between the Jewish and the “foreign” linguistic realms, embodied here in the German language, a language that could provide traditional Jews with new horizons of culture and knowledge.<sup>97</sup>

The Russian Empire took notice of the affiliation between German and modernizing reforms. Alexander I’s reforms of 1804 encouraged Jews



FIGURE 2. Pauline Wengeroff (1833–1916). Photograph courtesy of Electra Yourke.

to neglect Hebrew and Yiddish in favor of Russian, Polish, and German. The tsar thus acknowledged German's potential virtues for reforming Jews living under his reign. In 1841, the Russian minister of education asked the German-Jewish educator Max Lilienthal to counsel and promote the reform of Jewish education across the empire, an initiative that stirred a major controversy among Eastern European Jews.<sup>98</sup>

It would be an overstatement to paint the Haskalah and its adherents as sheer Germanophiles. That said, the function of German as a pathway to knowledge could at times turn it into an esteemed cultural object in its own right. The affective relationship of segments of the Eastern European Haskalah to the German language contributed to the evolution of a continuous tension around language matters among Eastern European Jews.<sup>99</sup> The imprint that the strains of the Haskalah and Reform Judaism made on Jewish politics continued to be felt for decades to come. German continued to be associated with Enlightenment values, with Westernizing forces in Jewish society, and with a disbelief in the ability of Eastern European Jewish society to modernize itself without external influences. The choice of speaking or reading German was thus often equated with the need to reform Jewish communities.

After 1848, as the Habsburg Empire allowed Jews from Galicia to move within the empire, Vienna saw the entry of thousands of Jewish families and individuals seeking economic mobility and social equality. Berlin was another destination for Eastern European Jews, especially after the 1881–1882 pogroms in Russia. Amid the violence and mass displacement of Jews, the Haskalah's rhetoric lost much of its appeal, yet the drive to reform the cultural and economic practices of Eastern European Jews continued to circulate in different forms, including in Jewish nationalist discourses.<sup>100</sup> Toward the end of the nineteenth century, ideals of German cosmopolitanism, Enlightenment, and humanism were confronted more directly by ethnic nationalism and antisemitism. The dire condition of masses of Jewish migrants to the West became a central theme in Jewish political debates. Questions of ideological and religious differences between Jewish migrants and Western European Jews acquired immediate political significance.

Along with the wave of immigration, a growing number of Jews from across the diaspora attended German-speaking universities, where they



found a fertile ground for socialization and training in politics, arts, and academia. A generation of intellectuals and political activists proficient in German often maintained an ambivalent approach to the legacy of German in Eastern Europe: German functioned as a path to European culture and to political activism while representing the liberal orientation of German Jewry and its pitfalls. It was associated with the German national cause, but it was also a major language of Jewish political self-assertion.

### German and the Sound of Progress

The ideological excess of a language is transmitted not only in its representations and in discussions about it but also in the language itself. Words, sounds, accents, and concepts inform the image of languages. Though elusive in nature, it is often the sensory responses to language or to certain words within it that acquire added meaning as beautiful, lucid, irritating, or violent. The debates on Jewish emancipation in Germany often invoked the aesthetic and spiritual assets of German. Gabriel Riesser, the most renowned advocate for Jewish emancipation in the first decades of the nineteenth century, saw German Jews as wholehearted patriots whose Jewish origins did not compromise their Germanness. In 1830, he wrote, "The thundering sounds of the German language, the songs of the German poems are those that inflamed and fed us with the holy fire of freedom."<sup>101</sup> Riesser stressed the centrality of the German language to Jewish acculturation and conveyed the idea that the sound of German carried cultural greatness and sublime values.

If German came to stand for ideas of harmony and progress, Yiddish often had an opposite image. The centrality of Germanic components in Western Yiddish led some Christian commentators in early modern Germany to perceive of Yiddish as essentially a German dialect like other dialects. At the same time, the differences and distinctive features of Yiddish, its fusion with Hebrew and Aramaic, and its patterns of pronunciation came to encapsulate the otherness of Jews within German society. Aversion to Yiddish was very often expressed through visceral discomfort with its sound.<sup>102</sup> In 1699, German theologian Johann Christoph Wagenseil wrote, "The Jews have never dealt with any language . . . so sinfully as with our German, for they have given it a totally foreign intonation and pronunciation, mutilated the good German words, tortured and distorted them, invented new words



unknown to us, and also mixed countless Hebrew words and phrases into German, so that whoever hears them speak German [Yiddish] cannot but believe that they are speaking nothing but pure Hebrew, since hardly a single comprehensible word comes out.”<sup>103</sup> Wagenseil’s use of theologically loaded terms and insinuations of violent conduct exemplify a perception according to which the formation of the Jewish dialect amounted to a collective crime. Jews had stolen German from their owners and brutalized it. The awkward sound of the Jewish language evoked then the Jewish “sin.”

As discussed earlier, starting from the late eighteenth century, a process of distancing from Yiddish took hold in German Jewish society. By and large, the vast majority of the German Jewish population acquired German, albeit with a very broad range of proficiency across regional, generational, and class divisions.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, a discourse on Jewish linguistic difference continued. German spoken by acculturated Jews in major urban centers at times lacked the characteristics of a local dialect. Having been acquired chiefly in the education system and not at home, it sounded more standardized in comparison with the dialect of their Christian neighbors. This applied to only a small segment of German Jewry, and yet it was an important segment because of its presence in universities, literature, and other public venues. Non-Jewish listeners occasionally depicted Jews’ use of German as pretentiously “clean.”<sup>105</sup> At the same time, German Jews maintained to various degrees some elements of Hebrew or Yiddish in their speech, whether in accent, words, or proverbs. This realm of the “distinct” sound of German spoken by Jews was often invoked to demonstrate one’s cultural and civilizational level or one’s degree of integration (or lack thereof) in society. The German verb *mauscheln*—which had been documented as early as 1622—was used frequently since the nineteenth century to designate a “Jewish” way of speaking but also of thinking and behaving.<sup>106</sup> This term is suggestive, because it is based on the alleged “deformation” of the name Moses (*Moshe*) when pronounced in Yiddish. It is thus a sonic element that drew the line between “proper” and “Jewish” German, and that was often directed at Eastern European Jews.<sup>107</sup>

Heymann Steinthal wrote in an essay from 1893 on the urgent need to promote the use of “pure German,” given that it demonstrated that the speaker was educated and “speaks in a language which is free from outland-

ishness.” *Mauschel*, for Steinthal, was a linguistic category different from Old Yiddish. It is tainted and should be abandoned: a person speaking *Mauschel* “injures not only our beloved German language, but also our sacred Hebrew language. Who could hear the prayer language of such Mauschel-Jews without being deeply offended!”<sup>108</sup> The sense of discomfort Steinthal described was not uncommon. Yiddish and Yiddish-accented German were subject to different forms of degradation, within and without the Jewish social sphere. The sound of pure German was the symbol of harmony and progress, whereas the sound of the Jewish “jargon” symbolized noise and moral backwardness.<sup>109</sup> Andrea Schatz has argued that the Berlin Haskalah’s use of the idea of “pure” languages constantly shifted and converged semantically between the understanding of “pure” as clear, transparent, reason-oriented language (in the German Enlightenment) and the Hebrew idea of a pure language, where purity meant loyalty to the Scripture’s divine essence and meaning.<sup>110</sup> In the following decades, ideas of linguistic purity and correctness continued to be entwined with theological, aesthetic, and political meanings.

Last, the sound of German was transmitted not only in the discourse of emancipation and in the realm of religious practice but also through philosophical and political terms. German Enlightenment, Romanticism, idealism, and nationalism had an impact on philosophy and politics worldwide. The works of Herder, Fichte, Hegel, and Kant generated conceptual apparatuses that continued to reverberate not only in German society but also in other nationalist movements in Europe. The impact of Hegel’s conception of self-determination and the different schools that followed his thought in subsequent decades—be they right- or left-wing interpreters—situated German concepts and vocabularies at the heart of European political thought. Jewish thinkers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including ideologues of Jewish nationalism, were indebted in various ways to German philosophical and national thought.<sup>111</sup>

By the same token, the political thought of Marx and Engels formed a matrix of vastly influential concepts. Marx’s texts became an integral part of the canon of political literature and likewise left an imprint on Jewish nationalist thought.<sup>112</sup> Nietzsche’s readership marks another type of diffusion of German concepts and ideas, inspiring generations of artists, thinkers, and politicians across the world and in the Jewish diaspora.<sup>113</sup> The affinity

between Yiddish and German would play an important role in this regard, as Yiddish writers would easily employ German terms and make them part of the Yiddish landscape.

### Conclusion

The Enlightenment brought about a profound change in the role of the German language in Jewish societies. Although initially the significance of German lay in its being the language from which Yiddish evolved, it gradually gained in importance in its own right, encapsulating and promoting processes of social transformation that were drawn out by religious and political forces within and without Jewish societies. The symbolic charge of German culture and language also underwent considerable vicissitudes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, broadening the potential realm of meanings, agendas, and allusions that could be associated with the German language, from cosmopolitanism to ethnic nationalism.

After the unification of Germany, the association of German with a nation-state predicated on ethnic and territorial unity overrode the cosmopolitan currents within German culture. Indeed, Bismarck's Germany, a symbol of militaristic proclivities and pursuit of political power, largely informed the late nineteenth-century image of Germanness and of the German language.<sup>114</sup> At the same time, German continued to serve as a major *lingua franca* among scientists, philosophers, writers, and political activists. For ideologues of Jewish nationhood, German entailed manifold visions, promises, and threats to the future of Jewish society. Using German was therefore a historically and politically laden choice. The presence of German in Jewish political imagination brought to the fore the question of whether using German implied submission—deliberate or undeliberate—to European, Christian society as well as a retreat from Jewish religious and historical roots. Was it possible, then, for Jewish nationalists outside German-speaking lands to use German for strictly instrumental purposes? The first attempt to do so was carried out in 1882 by a Jewish doctor from Odessa to whom the next chapter is devoted.

LEON PINSKER AND THE EMERGENCE  
OF GERMAN AS A LANGUAGE  
OF JEWISH NATIONALISM

Leon Pinsker (1821–1891), a Russian Jewish doctor from Odessa, published in 1882 an anonymous pamphlet in German titled *Autoemancipation! An Appeal to His People by a Russian Jew*, which addressed the crisis of Russian Jewry following the 1881–1882 wave of anti-Jewish pogroms and the ensuing emigration waves westward (fig. 3).<sup>1</sup> *Autoemancipation!* drew wide attention in the Jewish world, with reviews published by prominent figures across Europe. Even its critics tended to agree that the pamphlet powerfully conveyed the crisis of Russian Jewry and should therefore be addressed in earnest.<sup>2</sup> It was translated into various languages, including a widely circulated Yiddish version published in 1884 by Sh. Y. Abramovitsh (Mendele Moykher-Sforim).<sup>3</sup> Within a few years, *Autoemancipation!* entered the canon of Jewish national thought. Both Theodor Herzl and his ideological adversary Ahad Ha-Am depicted Pinsker as a precursor to their own worldviews.

A key element that distinguished *Autoemancipation!* from other Jewish nationalist publications of the period was its language. To be sure, Jews in Germany and Austria-Hungary had published previously on the Jewish “national question.” The most notable example was Moses Hess’s 1862 *Rome and Jerusalem: The Last National Question*.<sup>4</sup> This book would attract notice only in the late 1890s, when the Zionist movement under Theodor Herzl gained a central role in the Jewish political sphere and German served as an

# „Autoemancipation!“



Mahnruf an seine Stammesgenossen

von

einem russischen Juden.



Berlin SW.

Commissions-Verlag von W. Issleib (G. Schuhr).  
1882.

17.24

FIGURE 3. *Autoemancipation!* (Berlin: Commissions-Verlag von W. Issleib, 1882).  
Photograph courtesy of the National Library of Israel.

international language for Jewish nationalist activism. In 1882, however, this was not yet the case.

Pinsker's text transgressed the linguistic order of Jewish national debates, which were mostly held in Hebrew, Yiddish, or the state languages. More broadly, *Autoemancipation!* began a new chapter in the Jewish history of the German language. As shown in Chapter 1, since the eighteenth century German carried a series of political, religious, and ideological layers of significance in Jewish societies, rendering it a controversial marker of modernization and religious reform. Even as tendencies toward integration into Russian society in the 1860s strengthened, German remained a reference point for both proponents and opponents of the Haskalah. For *Autoemancipation!* to serve Pinsker's goal of communicating a call that would *unify* Jews and stir them to collective action, the text had to embody, as it were, the legitimacy of its language choice. While reflecting the Haskalah proclivity for the German language, *Autoemancipation!* marked a shift in Jewish political culture with respect to the potential function of the German language.

Before the publication of *Autoemancipation!*, Pinsker had been involved in Jewish politics as an editor and contributor to Russian Jewish periodicals. During the 1870s he was a member of the Odessa branch of the Society for the Promotion of Enlightenment among the Jews of Russia (known by its Russian acronym OPE), which encouraged Jews to acquire the Russian language. Pinsker did not publish a text on Jewish affairs in German before or after *Autoemancipation!*. His choice of language therefore derived directly from the kind of text he wanted to write, the type of readership he envisioned, and the echo that he hoped the publication would create.

Pinsker did not share his reasons for writing the text in German, but scholars have identified two plausible explanations. First, Pinsker's main audience was Jewish political and economic elites living in Germany and Austria.<sup>5</sup> In 1883, Pinsker wrote in a letter to the German rabbi Isaac Rülff that the only thing that could adequately address the challenges posed by the "Jewish question" would be action coming from Germany.<sup>6</sup> In a short note attached to the first copies of the pamphlet and sent to prominent Jewish leaders in Western Europe, Pinsker called on "men of influence" to promote a Jewish national revival.<sup>7</sup> A second explanation, also drawing on Pinsker's correspondence, concerns the fact that Russian censorship would likely have

posed obstacles for a publication with a stark nationalist tone and indirect criticism of the Russian government.<sup>8</sup>

Both explanations are convincing, but they go only so far in assessing the language politics of *Autoemancipation!*. This chapter examines the broader context and implications of Pinsker's language choice. It argues that *Autoemancipation!* was tightly bound up with the political landscape of nineteenth-century Europe, as its terminology and rhetoric tapped into various Jewish and European political discourses. Pinsker not only challenged the legal-political conception of emancipation as it had been used in German Jewish discourse; he also mobilized its social and revolutionary connotations, which had been associated with radical European political movements since 1848. By examining the text, its reception, and its correspondence with contemporary political currents, this chapter looks at how German became a language of Jewish national activism across borders.

### Nineteenth-Century Politics and the Jewish Public Sphere

The second half of the nineteenth century evinced a rapid change in the conditions of political action around the world. Evolving technologies of communication and transportation facilitated the movement of knowledge, ideas, and people between countries. Interest groups, both formal and informal, developed political strategies centered on public campaigns and the organization of international events and congresses, as well as clandestine networks of revolutionary activity. In an emerging "European public sphere" composed of public events, pamphlets, books, newspapers, and diplomatic channels, political groups and mass movements raised demands and argued for them, sought allies and attention, and propagated their views on contemporary social and political questions.<sup>9</sup>

These developments had a direct impact on how religious and ethnic minority groups, such as the Jewish minority, promoted their causes. Indeed, as recent studies have shown, the nineteenth century witnessed a structural shift in Jewish politics. Traditionally, wealthy and influential Jewish individuals lobbied the monarch or his advisors on behalf of Jewish communities. Aspects of this form of political praxis (*shtadlanut*, "intercession") continued in the nineteenth century. Yet at the same time, a new form of politics evolved:

organized appeals to political authorities and public opinion at the state, European, and global levels.<sup>10</sup>

An important moment in this process was the Damascus Affair of 1840, when Jewish community leaders, notables, and organizations from various parts of Europe appealed to European governments and public opinion in an attempt to protect Jews in Damascus and Rhodes who were being persecuted in a blood libel case.<sup>11</sup> The affair was reported internationally and helped consolidate channels of exchange and cooperation that continued to operate in the following decades. In the 1860s and 1870s, Jewish international organizations such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Anglo-Jewish Association were established, forming networks of activism that operated through diplomatic channels, public meetings, and the publication of reports and articles in the press.<sup>12</sup> Eastern European proponents of the Haskalah often used the new platforms to advocate social and political reforms in Jewish societies.<sup>13</sup>

Starting in the 1840s, Jewish newspapers had grown in number and circulation, assuming an increasingly key role in Jewish societies. Jewish newspapers offered their readers reports from Jewish communities across the world.<sup>14</sup> For instance, the popular *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, a self-proclaimed “nonpartisan publication for all Jewish interests” established by the German rabbi Ludwig Philippson in 1837, appeared three times a week and devoted one of its sections to reports and commentary on Jewish affairs in Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, and the United States. This practice was common to major Jewish newspapers of the period. Reflecting religious, ideological, and linguistic divisions, the Jewish press expanded considerably in the second half of the century and became the chief platform of the Jewish public sphere.

In the 1860 and 1870s, Jewish emancipation was debated extensively in the European and Jewish public spheres, with different international organizations and campaigns advocating the legal rights of Jews and their protection from violence.<sup>15</sup> In June 1878, in the aftermath of the Russian-Ottoman War, the Congress of Berlin convened to resolve border disputes and address the claims of Balkan national movements. Following intensive diplomatic work between the head of the congress, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, German



Jewish banker Gerson von Bleichröder, and several Jewish organizations, the congress agreed on a series of decisions and clauses asserting that the independence of Bulgaria, Serbia, and Romania would depend, inter alia, upon the granting of civic rights to their respective Jewish populations.<sup>16</sup>

Jews in Europe received the results of the congress with satisfaction and hope. The implementation of these agreements was partial at best, although their consequences were far-reaching. They gave a boost to Jewish nationalists, who argued openly for Jewish national self-determination and minority rights in line with the principles declared at the diplomatic gathering in Berlin.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the congress was a tour de force of German Jewish diplomacy and a successful example of how Western European models of Jewish emancipation could—with the active involvement of German and German Jewish figures—be introduced to Eastern European countries.<sup>18</sup>

Beyond the Jewish perspective, the congress consolidated Germany's role as a key European power and stabilizing force in international affairs. As A. J. P. Taylor put it, "The Congress of Berlin marked an epoch in where it met, not in what it did. . . . [It] demonstrated that a new Balance of Power, centered on Germany, had come into existence."<sup>19</sup> The congress also marked a disruption in the supremacy of French as the language of diplomacy, as the British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli chose to give his speech in English. By the end of the 1870s, Germany seemed to be the chief global power that could serve the Jewish cause and curb Russian discriminatory policies. At the same time, it was also clear, in light of the continuously difficult situation of Eastern European Jews, that the work of European diplomats alone could not guarantee Jewish minorities equality and security.

### Pinsker and *Autoemancipation!*

The son of Simha Pinsker, a prominent Hebrew maskil and scholar, Leon Pinsker belonged to a limited group of Russian Jews who were not a product of traditional Jewish schooling. He was proficient neither in Hebrew nor in Yiddish, and he was one of the first Jews to study at a Russian university. Pinsker was five years old in 1826 when his family moved from Galicia to Odessa. He received advanced medical training in Germany in 1848–1849, practiced the profession in Odessa, and volunteered to serve in the Russian army as a doctor during the Crimean War. He wrote occasionally (and

often anonymously) on Jewish affairs for the Russian Jewish press, arguing for the acculturation of Jews into Russian society. As Dmitry Shumsky has argued, however, Pinsker's position before 1881 was by no means "assimilationist." Pinsker championed the equality of civil rights for Russian Jews as subjects of the Russian Empire and as members of a distinct national and ethnic group.<sup>20</sup>

During the wave of pogroms in Russia, Pinsker traveled to France, England, Austria-Hungary, and Germany, where he discussed the crisis of Russian Jewry with several major figures. British member of Parliament Arthur Cohen urged Pinsker to write down and publish his thoughts, which he did during his stay in Berlin in the fall of 1882.<sup>21</sup> The resulting pamphlet was meant to provide a sweeping analysis of the Jewish question, and—given the then-recent wave of violence and Jewish political weakness more broadly—to formulate paths of action that would secure a territorial asylum for Jews living in danger and deprivation. The pamphlet confronted Jews with what Pinsker perceived to be an undeniable truth: Jews were a foreign element in non-Jewish society. They were looked at with fear, repulsion, and mistrust and therefore could not be genuinely integrated into society. The attitude toward Jews was a "psychic aberration" (*Psychose*), a culturally hereditary contempt for Jews that Pinsker called "Judeophobia." Jews were perceived as a ghost-like entity in society, a "dead walking among the living."<sup>22</sup> They aroused this fear and hatred despite—indeed because of—their ability to acquire the cultural and social habits of their surroundings.

Legislation gave Jews various degrees of legal emancipation, but "nowhere . . . did they succeed in obtaining from their fellow citizens recognition as native-born citizens of equal rank."<sup>23</sup> Pinsker saw legal emancipation as "the crowning achievement of our century," yet one that had little bearing on social emancipation. The European discourse on emancipation was therefore limited because it did not address the core of the Jewish question, namely the historical and pathological depths of anti-Jewish sentiments.

The main difficulty, however, was Jews' own "lack of desire for national independence."<sup>24</sup> They lacked national cohesion, self-determination, and a territorial center to which they could look and through which they could make a claim to their existence as a nation equal to other nations. As a diasporic people, Pinsker asserted, Jews had reached a level of passivity and

helplessness that created a disgraceful existence and inability to respond to this painful reality or even to recognize it. When laws protecting Jewish rights were passed, Jews perceived them as an act of charity, not as a natural right. According to Pinsker, true emancipation could not result from the granting of civil rights by states, but “only by the auto-emancipation of the Jewish people as a nation.”<sup>25</sup> They therefore needed to arrive at a national resolution to take action and find a realistic solution that would be recognized by other governments. The solution must consist of the acquisition of a suitable territory, serving as an asylum in which impoverished Jews could work independently, defend themselves, and regain their self-dignity.

Jewish national self-consciousness, as Pinsker perceived it, did not draw its legitimacy from religion and tradition per se. He relied on the language of national self-determination (*Selbstbestimmung*) as it had emerged in the preceding decades across Europe, and he invoked the recent examples of Serbia and Romania—whose independence was guaranteed at the Congress of Berlin—to substantiate his point.<sup>26</sup> In this respect, Pinsker’s pamphlet testifies to what the historian Holly Case has identified as a key feature of the argumentation of the “nationality question” in the nineteenth century, namely the comparable and indeed interlinked nature of national problems across Europe.<sup>27</sup> Pinsker posited that the demand for Jewish national rights was commensurate with a dominant current in international politics, not a romantic or religious longing for collective harmony. In operative terms, Pinsker called for the establishment of a national congress that would be composed of Jewish leaders and that would create a committee to examine possible territorial solutions worldwide. (At that time, Pinsker considered Palestine a distracting and unrealistic option.<sup>28</sup>) The congress would promote the initiative in cooperation with other governments, and a national fund would raise a budget necessary for the implementation of the plan.

### German as a Prestige Language

By the time Pinsker wrote his pamphlet, the German language had already reached the status of a world language and a respectable means of communication for the educated classes—a result not only of Germany’s rise as a major European power but also of the achievements and reputation of German literature, academia, and science.<sup>29</sup> Largely owing to the gradual decline

of French, it was German that, in the second half of the century, served as a “prestige language” and offered non-Germans a pathway to the realms of knowledge and politics.<sup>30</sup> In order to reach centers of political and intellectual power, one had to make use of the languages of those centers. Viewed in this way, Pinsker’s language choice reflected an attempt to mobilize German’s prestige in order to give greater resonance to the national cause of Eastern European Jews. Yet beyond the mere use of German, Pinsker’s text drew heavily on ideas and concepts from discursive domains—nationalism, philosophy, and science—in which German’s prestige loomed large.

The most important of these domains was the idiom of nationalism. Pinsker compared the condition of Jews to that of Cinderella (*Aschenbrödel*), drawing on Ludwig Bechstein’s popular 1845 compilation of fairy tales. In so doing, he employed a common feature in German national rhetoric, a gendered image of the nation as pure and gentle, a victim of mistreatment by surrounding forces.<sup>31</sup> Pinsker also demonstrated his familiarity with the nuances of German nationalist terms by distinguishing *Vaterland*, *Mutterland*, and *Heimat*.<sup>32</sup> He argued that Jews have “many motherlands” but “no fatherland,” and he noted that what Jews needed to fight for was a *Heimat*—a place they would consider as their own and where they would not be seen as mere guests. However, a fatherland was far from sight, considering that the historical land of Jews was not a realistic option as a place in which they could settle and obtain self-rule. By using the term *Heimat*, Pinsker pointed to a sense of rootedness, even if that feeling was not based on historical attachment to that territory.

Pinsker’s national rhetoric also fed on the imagery of German national Romanticism, associated chiefly with Herder and Fichte. He adopted the postulate that nations were “living organisms,” among which Jews felt like aliens. By the same token, Pinsker saw the creation of a living organic whole as the chief goal of Jews, who were currently living like “an organism dangerously ill.”<sup>33</sup> Similar to a dominant romantic narrative of German history, Pinsker asserted that Jews had ceased to exist as a political unity, yet continued to exist “spiritually” (*geistig*) as a nation. He further asserted that Jews had not yet reached the condition of a living nation because “they lack a certain distinctive national character (*Volkstümlichkeit*) possessed by every other nation,” which derives from living together. Herder and Fichte’s thought is also discernible in Pinsker’s call for the “free, active development of our national

force (*nationale Kraft*) and native (*urwüchsig*) genius.” These expressions were predicated on the idea that national self-determination draws much of its legitimacy from the latent, primordial qualities of a people. Pinsker criticized Jewish “fanatic patriots” who, for the purpose of proving their loyalty to their country, “deny their ancient national character (*ureigenes Wesen*).”<sup>34</sup> Here, too, Pinsker endorsed Herder’s idea of a division between different peoples and nations, with each carrying its own peculiar and indivisible essence. Last—and similar to Herder and to a predominant feature of nineteenth-century nationalist thought—Pinsker employed the division between “Aryans” and “Semites.”<sup>35</sup> He saw the presumed civilizational origin and character of Jews as a major source of legitimacy for Jewish national claims.<sup>36</sup>

Pinsker’s debt to Romanticist nationalism is striking given that he tried to present himself as a pragmatic and realistic writer responding to a state of crisis and to the rise of the principle of territorial nationalism. He utilized both forms of national reasoning, capturing what John Breuilly has identified as a driving force of nationalist reasoning, namely the “perpetual ambiguity” between notions of political community and cultural community.<sup>37</sup> Through the use of evocative terms from contemporary political language and from rooted tropes of national self-legitimization, Pinsker employed a familiar idiom for his German readership.

A second, closely related, discursive domain that Pinsker mobilized was German philosophy. He was a product of Enlightenment thought to the extent that he believed that the responsibility for the Jewish condition could not be ascribed entirely to the state or to society and that Jews had to emancipate themselves following their own autonomous will. He acknowledged the moral supremacy of what Kant and Herder called *Humanitätsidee* (the idea of humanity) while asserting that it was far from being realized—hence the need to focus on practical solutions at a national level. Elsewhere he noted that the goal of “eternal peace” (*ewiger Friede*) still awaited realization, echoing the idea Kant had formulated in his 1795 tract *Zum ewigen Frieden*. As Dmitry Shumsky has argued, it is from the same text that Pinsker drew the notion of hospitality (*Gastfreundschaft*). So long as Jews lacked territorial self-rule, they continued to be deemed houseless nomads in their lands of residence. By establishing Jewish self-government, Jews in different parts of the world would enjoy civic equality based on the principle of reciprocity

among independent nations.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, Pinsker's pamphlet echoed Hegelian philosophy, particularly when depicting the Jewish national cause as a struggle for "recognition" (*Anerkennung*) and when decrying the Jews' loss of "national self-consciousness" (*nationales Selbstbewußtsein*).<sup>39</sup>

Pinsker's text also took advantage of German's prestige by embracing scientific, empirical, and medical idioms. As a writer of the nineteenth century, his positions echoed scientific positivism in many ways. He postulated that the human race's hatred toward Jews "rests upon anthropological and social principles, innate and ineradicable," hence the need to carve out a territorial path.<sup>40</sup> The condition of Jews, according to Pinsker, owed "purely and simply to the operation of those general forces, the consequence of the nature of humanity."<sup>41</sup> Pinsker used medical jargon to draw a parallel between the condition of Jews to that of a sick person unaware of his lack of hunger and thirst—a reference to the absent determination of Jews to liberate themselves from their "anorexia."<sup>42</sup> Pinsker's second and more extensive use of medical jargon appeared in his famous diagnosis of antisemitism as a pathology, "Judeophobia," a disease transmitted from one generation to the other and that involved fear and alienation from the Jew, an utter rejection and distancing that impeded any genuine possibility of respectful coexistence. Whereas the reference to anorexia was metaphorical, the invocation of Judeophobia was a direct application of the scientific and medical language of pathologies, symptoms, and cures to social matters, drawing on an understanding of society as the interaction among distinct organisms.<sup>43</sup>

Pinsker, whose only book publication before 1882 was a German-language overview of balneotherapy sites in Odessa, was not blind to German's international and esteemed status in scholarly and scientific domains.<sup>44</sup> Although his message could have been conveyed in other languages, its use of particularly evocative terminology—easily discernible for German readers of the time—added to the pamphlet an air of an urgent, provocative intervention in the "Jewish question" of the time. German Jewish responses to the text indeed took notice of Pinsker's striking rhetoric. The German rabbi and writer Ludwig Philippson accused the anonymous writer of suffering from a disease himself—namely, "Russian nihilism"—given his alleged obsession with sickness and death.<sup>45</sup> Philippson was also critical of Pinsker's pessimistic account of the relations between Jews and non-Jews. He asserted that "some

of the author's statements have appeared thus far only in texts written by antisemites."<sup>46</sup> The Jewish scholar Moritz Steinschneider, commenting on the pamphlet after it had been endorsed by proponents of Jewish settlement in Palestine, went even further, arguing that "this kind of propaganda for colonization in Palestine is more dangerous than antisemitism."<sup>47</sup> For Philippson and Steinschneider, the fact that *Autoemancipation!* was written in German seemed to jeopardize the state of German Jews, as it was predicated on an assumption that was shared by antisemitic opponents of Jewish emancipation, namely that Jews were "never at home." This, for instance, was a message that was proclaimed in the 1877 antisemitic pamphlet *The Strangers in Our House! A Warning Call to the German People, by a Citizen of Berlin*.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps as a defensive response to Pinsker's proficiency in German, Philippson asserted that the gist of Pinsker's perception was wrapped in "eloquent yet mostly hollow phrases," thus questioning the genuine ability of the Russian-Jewish author to comprehend the implications of the poignant words he was using. By contrast, supportive comments by Russian maskilim referred to Pinsker's use of "a tongue for teaching" (*leshon lemudim*) or his "noble words" (*divre negidim*) as one of the text's main virtues.<sup>49</sup> In the United States, Emma Lazarus wrote of "a very remarkable pamphlet just printed in Germany, written by a Russian Jew." She praised the anonymous writer's "fiery eloquence and his depth and fervor of conviction," whose "appeal for nationality is a pregnant indication of the spirit of the times."<sup>50</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether and to what extent Pinsker consciously adopted the terms and rhetorical features of German national, philosophical, and scientific languages. Indeed, some of these features were common in the contemporary press.<sup>51</sup> Be that as it may, Pinsker made a manifold, eclectic, at times contradictory use of different arguments, concepts, and metaphors that were rooted in the German language, especially in its strongest intellectual fields of influence. This augmented the effect of his message and helped situate the Jewish national question within the political, ideological, and scholarly discourses of the period.

### Discursive Attention and (Trans)national Agitation

*Autoemancipation!* was a radical text, but considering the turbulence in the Jewish world during the pogroms of 1881–1882, it was not a voice in the des-

ert. Indeed, it was published in September 1882, following a flood of other publications and debates over the Jewish question and the immigration crisis.<sup>52</sup> The genre of pamphlets and manifestos had already emerged as a new venue for molding the “new politics” of the Jewish world, as Israel Bartal has put it. Such publications conveyed disenchantment with the prospect of gradual civil emancipation granted by the Russian state.<sup>53</sup> In May 1881, Moses Schrenzel, a Jewish publicist from Lemberg (Lviv), published a pamphlet in German, *The Solution of the Jewish Question*, that voiced disillusion with political emancipation and called instead for the establishment of a Jewish state in America.<sup>54</sup> In his (favorable) review of *Autoemancipation!*, the Russian maskil Y. L. Gordon coupled the text with another German-language pamphlet, published in March of the same year by Joseph von Wertheimer, an Austrian Jewish writer, philanthropist, and activist for Jewish emancipation.<sup>55</sup>

Although Wertheimer was a proponent of the Western idea of emancipation, he made a similar distinction between social and political emancipation, thus recognizing the limits of the latter.<sup>56</sup> Wertheimer saw “mass emigration” (*Exodus in Masse*) as an impractical solution given the poor conditions in which Jews too often found themselves in their new countries. Yet similar to what Pinsker would suggest five months later, Wertheimer called for the establishment of a supranational alliance of Jewish leaders from around the world—an “alliance of alliances,” as Wertheimer put it—that would represent Jews and promote their cause.<sup>57</sup> Pinsker, residing in Vienna and Berlin during these months, might indeed have encountered Wertheimer’s pamphlet.

Pinsker thus did not bring forth a new approach to the crisis of Eastern European Jewry. Still, juxtaposed to the eruption of political texts on the Jewish question, his pamphlet stood out because its language was not associated with Jewish nationalist agitation in Russia. In a preface to his Yiddish rendition of *Autoemancipation!*, Sh. Y. Abramovitsh pointed to the pamphlet’s linguistic significance by noting that it had been written in German, “the language of the people whose renowned intellectuals’ wisdom and humanness is as great as the madness and evilness of its truculent fools.”<sup>58</sup> Pinsker, for his part, disclosed only the fact that the author was “a Russian Jew”—an elusively simple label that concealed the extent of the author’s immersion in German language and culture, as well as his remoteness from the social



conditions of the majority of Russian Jews. Tellingly, a French commentator expressed doubts about whether the author was really a Russian Jew.<sup>59</sup>

Pinsker's hometown, Odessa, was a likely setting to nourish multilingual modes of political action. The modern port city differed from the rest of Russia in the more Westernized forms of culture and everyday life that prevailed there, befitting its mercantile, multinational population. Odessa Jews were more prone to undergo a process of acculturation that, according to Steven Zipperstein, "resulted from a recognition of the usefulness of the other culture's skills (linguistic, technical, or otherwise), quite independent of larger cultural benefits."<sup>60</sup> Processes of acculturation and secularization were accordingly motivated less by the intellectual and political work of maskilim and more by social, economic, and other practical needs.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, Odessa was a center of exchange of goods and ideas with Galicia. This state of affairs nourished the necessity and significance of knowing German. Modern Jewish schools established in Odessa in the 1830s adopted German as a language of instruction.<sup>62</sup> In 1860, the city's Jewish community appointed the German rabbi Simon Leon Schwabacher as municipal rabbi, a position he held until 1888.<sup>63</sup>

Pinsker was a product of the cultural atmosphere of mid-nineteenth-century Odessa, although some biographical details might further explain his linguistic preferences. In keeping with a common practice among Galician maskilim, Pinsker's family taught him German from an early age. He studied at a Jewish school—coestablished by his father—in which the languages of instruction were Russian and German. But he also belonged to a generation of young, educated Jews who were drawn to the allure of Russian as a vehicle of integration into Russian society. According to Alter Druyanow, Pinsker "was torn between the German and Russian languages" and was thus perhaps particularly sensitive to distinctions between a mother tongue and a civic tongue.<sup>64</sup>

Pinsker's linguistic concerns were not merely personal. He was a member of a social milieu that probed questions of linguistic loyalty in an era increasingly defined by nationalist modes of thought. In a debate in 1873, Y. L. Gordon, who respected and yet also criticized the political and scholarly attitudes advanced by German Jewish intellectuals,<sup>65</sup> supported the initiative of the Society for the Promotion of Enlightenment among the Jews

of Russia (OPE) to subsidize the study of Russian Jewish students in the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau. This seminary, headed by Zecharias Frankel, was a leading center of Jewish scholarship. Some members of the OPE (including Pinsker), however, saw education in the German “language and spirit” a move that went against OPE’s goal of promulgating Russian language among Jews. Gordon argued that the Russification effort and the Enlightenment of the Jews are not one and the same, and that, as Michael Stanislawski summarized his position, “linguistic acculturation is not coterminous with the inner transformation of the Jews, their abandonment of degrading superstitions and outdated mores that cannot be synthesized with modernity.”<sup>66</sup> Gordon’s stance exemplified the effect that the rise of ethnic nationalism in the second half of the century had on maskilim and Jewish nationalists. Different from the debates of the Haskalah in the early decades of the century, the connection between using a language and endorsing its respective culture could no longer be taken for granted.

Another significant detail in this respect was Pinsker’s personal interest in Central European politics following the events of 1848. During his stay in Germany and Austria in 1848–1849, Pinsker met with Jewish figures such as Adolf Jellinek, Ludwig Philippson, and Abraham Geiger.<sup>67</sup> He returned to Austria and Germany in later years, followed closely the national politics of the Habsburg Empire, and wrote about it in the early 1860s for the Russian-Jewish journals *Razsvet* and *Sion*. In several of these articles, Pinsker examined the discrepancy between the official policies toward Jews in Hungary following the 1848 events and the failure to recognize Jews as a national minority. In one article, Pinsker asserted that the leaders of the Hungarian national movement were “expecting Jews to be reborn as Magyars, and thereby forget that one can adopt from a different people—and this, too, not all at once—[only] the external forms: clothes, a way of life, customs, language, but by no means the spirit or the character of the foreign nationality.” By raising the question of national rights in Central Europe, Pinsker offered an insight into what he saw as the false premises of Jewish assimilation.<sup>68</sup> Apart from such commentaries, Pinsker also published historical pieces in which he presented and praised earlier Jewish civil-emancipatory efforts. For instance, in 1880 he wrote about French Jewish statesman Adolphe Crémieux and his diplomatic efforts during the Damascus Affair, and about Gabriel

Riesser, the chief advocate of German Jewish legal emancipation. According to Dmitry Shumsky, Pinsker's preoccupation with the legal and cultural status of Jews in Western Europe and the Habsburg Empire enabled him to engage critically, if indirectly, with the Russian government's policies toward its own Jewish population.<sup>69</sup>

One of the issues that stood at the heart of debates over Jews' political status, both in Eastern and in Central Europe, was language. In the Habsburg Empire, language divisions played a central role in broader debates over the "national question." In 1784, Emperor Joseph II instituted German as the official language of imperial administration, a step that sparked opposition in different parts of the empire. This led to certain concessions, including the empire's official recognition of other languages. Language was thus a domain through which ethnic and ideological tensions were channeled. Jews in particular were portrayed—either as a praise or as a reproach—as harbingers of the German language throughout the empire.<sup>70</sup> After the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1867, national groups in the Habsburg Empire promoted with growing vehemence their national languages at the expense of German, the language of the empire, although multilingualism persisted to various degrees into the twentieth century.<sup>71</sup>

One of the functions of German in the Habsburg Empire was that of a mediating language between minorities and the empire, and among different national minorities. The pan-Slav congress of 1848 was held in Prague, and its language of communication—and of its official written statements—was German.<sup>72</sup> Mikhail Bakunin, a leading figure in socialist and anarchist circles since the mid-nineteenth century, was one of the two Russian participants at the congress. His revolutionary activity forced him to flee Prague after being denounced to the police. He found refuge in Berlin, where he wrote a pamphlet—*A Call to the Slavs by a Russian Patriot*—in which he laid out his worldview, as well as his main accusations against German and Austrian imperial politics.<sup>73</sup> We cannot assume that Pinsker read Bakunin's pamphlet, but a brief comparison between the two texts illustrates how features of the idiom of Central European political agitation circulated between ideological camps.<sup>74</sup> Pinsker, who followed the political conversations in Central Europe, utilized many of its rhetorical characteristics. Pinsker's and Bakunin's pam-

phlets differed in the type of action they envisioned (Pinsker focused on organized political activity, whereas Bakunin called for revolutionary uprising), but they both emphasized the indispensability of popular national sentiment to stir action and considered the current moment a window of opportunity for putting an end to a history of passivity.<sup>75</sup>

The two pamphlets also stressed cross-national unity as a key to shaking off the yoke of subjugation. Pinsker decried the fact that the dispersal of Jews had become the main feature of their existence: "The Jewish people have no fatherland of their own, though many motherlands; they have no rallying point, no center of gravity, no government."<sup>76</sup> He therefore saw an initial remedy in the formation of a unified bond that would promote the recuperation of Jewish national dignity. Bakunin likewise saw the division of the Slavic peoples as the major obstacle preventing them from taking effective political action.<sup>77</sup> In this sense, there was a certain resemblance between the conditions of the Slavic and the Jewish peoples as depicted in the two pamphlets. In both cases, a full realization of their historical condition and their potential power had yet to be achieved. In both cases as well, their powerless existence could not be addressed in conventional diplomatic ways. In Bakunin's view, a diplomatic effort would not shatter the position of European ruling elites; in Pinsker's, it would not solve the Jewish question. Bakunin thus turned to revolution as a first step, followed by the establishment of a confederation of Slavic nations. Pinsker, merging the drive of the 1848 national movements with lessons learned from their failures, called for a national movement that would operate autonomously while seeking international legitimacy and cooperation. Bakunin asserted, "Your foreign politics cannot transform before you reconfigure your inner politics," a similar message to that of Pinsker, who saw emancipation as an insufficient form of political struggle—hence the calls for "autoemancipation" and the establishment of a national congress.<sup>78</sup> In both cases, self-reliance and decisive collective action were considered the chief vehicles for freedom.

This comparison sheds light on two latent aspects of *Autoemancipation!*. First, to understand the impact of Pinsker's language choice, it is fruitful to place his pamphlet within the context of the corpus of national revival and popular agitation published in German. Ideas of self-emancipation and

“national rebirth” (*nationale Wiedergeburt*) were commonplace during the 1848 upheavals, and Pinsker’s language choice made the communication of these ideas more effective. Having followed the development of national movements in Central Europe since the 1840s and the status of the Jewish question therein, Pinsker was aware of the importance of the continuous struggle for international legitimacy and minority rights. His territorial nationalism was thus located in two seemingly separate discourses: national self-reliance, on the one hand, and minority politics within an international multiempire order, on the other.

Second, the German language served as more than a means of communication in the texts written by Bakunin and Pinsker. Both authors dealt with national groups that did not have a common language and territory. In their similar titles, the authors presented themselves as Russians—Pinsker as a Russian Jew, Bakunin as a Russian patriot. This fact seems to have been a message in itself. Pinsker wrote to his fellow Jews and Bakunin to his fellow Slavs. Both used German, which, beyond its communicative purpose, also embodied, to a large degree, the ideological worldview that their message challenged. This is the sense in which the language choice also served as a means of remonstrance. Bakunin ruthlessly wrote against the empires and called for the dissolution of the Austrian monarchy, whereas Pinsker criticized the tenets of German and German Jewish discourse on legal-political emancipation and emphasized Jews’ historically and psychologically rooted foreignness in society. German Jews rarely brought up this latter claim. Indeed, German Jewish intellectuals and activists polemicized during these years against antisemitic authors who questioned the ability of Jews to assimilate into German society.<sup>79</sup>

Pinsker’s language choice gave his message an urgency not only for his potential supporters but also, and at least as importantly, for his potential antagonists. To be sure, choosing German allowed Pinsker to reach wide and influential audiences in the Jewish world and beyond. Yet to comprehend the strong reactions the pamphlet provoked, it needs to be understood as a bold intervention by an outsider—indeed, a “Russian Jew”—in the German-speaking discourse, which, until then, hardly ever produced irredentist voices of Jewish national self-determination or claims for territorial autonomy. The

effect of *Autoemancipation!* on the Jewish political discourse was thus closely entwined with Pinsker's language choice and its implications.

### Liberalism, Socialism, and the Problem with Emancipation

Pinsker's criticism was directed not only at Western European Jews but also at Eastern European Jews' political latitude. Among Russian Jews, the concept of emancipation played a somewhat different role than it did in Central and Western Europe. The term *emancipation* was not part of the tsarist state's administrative vocabulary. Rather, the transformation of Jews' legal status depended first and foremost on "reorganization" and "transformation" of Jewish life.<sup>80</sup> Against this background, Russian-Jewish liberals and maskilim used the term in two main ways: when referring either to the process of civic-political emancipation taking place in Western Europe or to the social, religious, and educational reforms that ought to take place within Jewish communities in Russia. The latter meaning was occasionally designated as *samo-emantsipatsiia* (self-emancipation). As Eli Lederhendler has argued, already before the 1881–1882 pogroms, parts of the Haskalah movement had grown disillusioned with state-oriented politics, promoting instead a "politics of self-liberation."<sup>81</sup>

For Russian liberal Jews, the pogroms posed a significant political challenge amid what appeared to be the state's failure to protect Jews from antisemitic violence. A telling example of a response to this challenge was a Russian-language essay from 1883, "What Kind of Self-Emancipation Do Jews Need?" written by Simon Dubnow, then a rising Jewish intellectual who would later turn to Jewish nationalist autonomism and become its leading thinker.<sup>82</sup> In his memoirs, Dubnow noted that he had decided to write the essay as a response to the "prevailing agitation following the publication of Doctor Pinsker's pamphlet, which wrecked all our hopes for civic emancipation and a cultural renewal in a European spirit."<sup>83</sup> In the essay, Dubnow wrote that the outburst of violence should be seen as having impeded the gradual progress that had been made in previous decades but should not lead Jews to renounce these efforts altogether: "The preachers of self-emancipation and especially their most influential wing, the Palestinists . . . have argued that there has been a triumph of the national principle, that Jews should

adapt themselves to the new cultural conditions and separate themselves off as a living nation. [But this is] a superficial attitude toward history.”<sup>84</sup> Jews should instead continue to strive toward a moderate form of fusion with society, to advocate gradual religious reform and cultural work comparable to that which had fruitfully taken place in Germany. The proper understanding and goal of Jewish self-emancipation should be, according to Dubnow, the integration of Jews into Russian society.<sup>85</sup> In a review from 1884, Dubnow further argued that it was necessary to form a united effort promoting “equality before the law, on the one hand, and internal self-emancipation, on the other.”<sup>86</sup> Dubnow did not merely polemicize against Pinsker’s position, then: he viewed *Autoemancipation!* and its followers as engaging in a struggle over the meaning of (self-)emancipation, as they were imbuing it with nationalist and radical meanings. As noted earlier, Pinsker did not reject efforts toward civic emancipation, and he believed that an organized national action would indeed bolster such efforts. Still, Dubnow’s reaction reveals the ways in which the question of the meaning of Jewish emancipation operated after the publication of Pinsker’s pamphlet.

The contested nature of the term “emancipation” resulted not only from Jewish political divisions but also from its multiple meanings in national and international discourses since the middle of the century. The term was associated with the liberation of nations, slaves, peasants, women, Jews, Catholics, workers, or humanity as a whole. Karl Martin Grass and Reinhart Koselleck, who investigated the appearance of the term in European politics and thought, have shown that the revolutionary and propagandistic value attached to it starting in the late 1840s had made it a buzzword denoting the transformation of the social order—and not merely the protection of legal rights.

By the mid-1870s, the term was used by political commentators representing different, indeed opposing, political worldviews.<sup>87</sup> Socialists, for example, though not yet a major political power, had an important part in the dissemination of the idea of emancipation in Germany and beyond. Germany’s two socialist parties enjoyed growing popularity in the early 1870s, eventually merging in 1875, and Bismarck’s 1878 Anti-Socialist Laws only contributed to the appeal of socialist ideas to the working classes and other activist circles.<sup>88</sup> In tsarist Russia, socialist ideas circulated widely among Russian intellectuals

during the 1870s and had a direct impact on Russian populists searching for effective ideas and practices to disrupt the political order.<sup>89</sup> During that decade, activists and intellectuals rediscovered the *Communist Manifesto*, which was published in nine editions and six languages between 1871 and 1873.<sup>90</sup> According to Eliyahu Stern, “The discovery of Karl Marx’s writings by Russian Jews in the mid-1870s changed the way they viewed their situation and provided a framework for them to become political actors.”<sup>91</sup> One did not have to be a self-avowed socialist to recognize unfair distribution of resources as well as the state’s failure to protect Jews and other vulnerable groups. Socialism was one of the vectors through which emancipation turned into “a concept of historical movement, without disavowing its juridical implications,” as Koselleck put it.<sup>92</sup>

*Autoemancipation!* exemplified this development. Although the text was remote from the socialist agenda, it nonetheless included conspicuous elements of socialist rhetoric. Scholars have already compared *Autoemancipation!*’s role in Zionist history to that of the *Communist Manifesto* in socialist history, referring chiefly to the Jewish nationalist text’s retrospective status as a “founding text,” as well as to common genre features—a bold, unequivocal attitude to the posed problem, sweeping statements, and an aggressive tone.<sup>93</sup> The similarity between the texts goes even further, in fact, as the *Communist Manifesto* and *Autoemancipation!* shared certain structural and rhetorical features. For instance, both texts depicted a history of a collective that had been suffering from persistent discrimination and injustice. In *Autoemancipation!*, as noted earlier, Pinsker described society’s perception of Jews as that of a ghost-like entity (*Judengespenst*) that spreads fear and anxiety. Marx and Engels used a similar image to describe the “specter” (*Gespenst*) of communism.<sup>94</sup> Both texts described the present moment as the peak in a history of injustice that ought to be disrupted through collective action.

The emancipatory messages of *Autoemancipation!* and the *Communist Manifesto* contained a degree of criticism toward those members of the oppressed masses who had accepted their condition with passivity and listlessness. While putting the blame on the oppressor, the authors nevertheless perceived inadequate “self-consciousness” on the part of the oppressed as a major impediment to historical change. The historical condition that characterized the cases of both the Jews and the proletariat was their homelessness



in the era of the state. Both were an integral part of society but nonetheless alienated from it and from their own historical fate. Marx and Engels wrote that “workers have no fatherland,” as did Pinsker with respect to the Jews: “The Jewish people have no fatherland, even if many motherlands.” The *Communist Manifesto* questioned the myth of national unity amid the pauperization and alienation of the proletariat—a condition that required a national and eventually international response by the working classes of the world. Pinsker invoked the attachment of Jews to their respective motherlands, but his discussion emphasized the historically rooted features that distinguish the case of Jews from that of other nationalities. He consequently called for a national rejuvenation that would not deny the national attachment of Jews to their lands of residence.<sup>95</sup> Both texts reckoned that appealing to governments would be a futile action given the social conditions that gave rise to exploitation (in Marx and Engels) or antisemitism (in Pinsker). The call for action was a transnational one in both cases, reinforcing and undermining the national principle, and both texts proclaimed that the oppressed had nothing left to lose.<sup>96</sup>

A subtler parallel between the texts lay in their concurring adoption and subversion of the idea of emancipation. Marx had already addressed the problem of Jewish emancipation in an 1844 essay (which became famous only posthumously).<sup>97</sup> In it, he argued that the problem lay not in Jewish separatism but more generally in capitalism and its profound imprint on the “Jewish spirit.” In opposition to Bruno Bauer, who saw Jews and Judaism as a religious entity, Marx saw “the Jew” in his economic and social traits—“the everyday Jew.”<sup>98</sup> He therefore challenged the goal of emancipation by replacing the categories through which it was normally handled and by shifting the emphasis from religious to economic and quotidian considerations.

Marx’s depiction of Jews was rooted in the Christian imagery of Judaism, although it simultaneously secularized the Jewish problem by situating it within the “capitalist problem.”<sup>99</sup> His text was not disseminated broadly at the time of its publication, but it pointedly reflected the socialist challenge to the state-centered, legal conception of emancipation. Eliyahu Stern is therefore right to situate Pinsker’s pamphlet within the political-intellectual current of “Jewish materialism,” emerging in the 1870s. This current sought to place the concrete—not merely spiritual—well-being and economic con-

dition of Jews at the heart of Jewish political action.<sup>100</sup> The correspondence of some of Pinsker's vocabulary and rhetoric to socialist motifs and ideas enhanced its ability to appear as a timely text that echoed the European political language of the time.

### Secularizing Jewish Nationalism

Pinsker's arguments were not rooted in religion. His call for a united effort to transform the Jewish condition was not based on Jews' self-understanding as a chosen people but rather on their status as a nation bereft of sovereignty. Pinsker remarked acerbically that the chosenness of Jews consisted in their being "chosen for universal hatred." The idea of a "holy land" was foreign to Pinsker and went against the order of the day. He also held that the belief in the Messiah had been an obstacle to the realization of national emancipation.<sup>101</sup> Jacob Talmon argued that it was precisely Pinsker's lack of religious reasoning that made his call for action more effective, because it underscored its relevance to the national debates of the period.<sup>102</sup> In this respect, *Autoemancipation!* departed from Jewish nationalist rhetoric in the early 1880s. Even Jewish nationalists who were inspired by secular and materialist ideas employed Jewish religious terminology and often invoked the Bible as the foundational text of the Jewish nation and its primary source of legitimacy.<sup>103</sup>

*Autoemancipation!* thus did not fit easily into the rhetoric of Eastern European Jewish nationalism. In his 1882 review, Y. L. Gordon noted that "this word [*Autoemancipation*] cannot be easily rendered into the Holy Tongue."<sup>104</sup> The first attempt to translate the pamphlet into Hebrew, made by Shmuel Leib Zitron, was published in several installments in 1882 in the periodical *Ha-Magid*, which was based in East Prussia but disseminated widely in Russia.<sup>105</sup> In Hebrew, the title was translated as "an appeal from a Jewish man born in Russia," as opposed to the German title which was signed by "a Russian Jew." Pinsker's address to his "fellow kin" (*Stammesgenossen*) was rendered by Zitron as "fellow believers" (*ehav bnei emuna*). The text in its Hebrew version stated that Jews should not put their trust in emancipation but commit themselves instead to establishing a "Hebrew kingdom" that would "be acceptable to the great rulers of the land". Pinsker was alarmed by the changes in the Hebrew version and asked to publish a clarification (anonymously, and signed by his friend and ideological ally Moshe Leib Lilienblum), in which

he noted that some of the messages were conveyed inaccurately, one of which was the idea that “emancipation could take place once the Israelite nation is redeemed through the establishment of a Hebrew kingdom.”<sup>106</sup> Zitron later recalled how hard he had tried “to find a proper and accurate Hebrew equivalent for ‘Autoemancipation,’” calling it “Self-Liberty” (*herut atsmit*). The difficulty stemmed from the fact that during these years, Zitron noted, Hebrew writers “would retreat as if encountering a lion when faced with any word that did not have its root and source in the Bible.”<sup>107</sup>

Russian censorship, which found the text and particularly its title to be too provocative, posed another challenge for Hebrew publishers seeking to publish Pinsker’s message in Russia. *Ha-Magid’s* editor, David Gordon, instructed Zitron to curb the language of the pamphlet and to find a different title, adding half-humorously that, for the censor, “liberty can only be granted graciously by Cossacks.”<sup>108</sup> Zitron decided, then, to call the essay “The Redemption of Israel” (*teshuat yisrael*). A year later, he published *Autoemancipation!* as a booklet under the title *If I Am Not for Myself, Then Who Will Be for Me?*, Hillel’s proverb from the Mishna, quoted in the pamphlet’s motto. Amid the tension between the radical European understanding of emancipation as liberty and a messianic call for redemption, the new title advocated independent political action while remaining anchored in Jewish linguistic and religious resources.

Pinsker’s choice to write in German thus allowed him to mobilize the emancipatory discourses of the nineteenth century, which entailed elements of redemption and historical promise. All the while, Pinsker kept a distance from Jewish or Christian lore, and he presented his call as an attempt to break away from religious constraints. David Gordon wrote in a letter to the German rabbi Isaac Rülff that *Autoemancipation!* “is rooted in the mundane but has been consecrated by its holy belief in the vocation of our prophets.”<sup>109</sup> *Autoemancipation!* contributed, then, to the transformation of Jewish political language while maintaining a mutually enriching tension between a secular message and a religious undertone.

The religious entanglement can be further explored by looking at a review written by Perets Smolenskin. A leading writer of the Russian Haskalah and an early proponent of Jewish nationalism who resided in Vienna, Smolenskin

edited the Hebrew journal *Ha-Shahar* ("The Dawn"), which is discussed at greater length in the next chapter. Smolenskin maintained that there was not much novelty in Pinsker's pamphlet: "No great news has been revealed to us here, not for anyone who knows Hebrew and knows what has been written in it in the last years, nor for anyone who knows the spirit of the majority of Jews in Russia, whose voice is echoed in it too." Smolenskin was also likely alluding here to his own work, which he had dedicated to the lifting of the national spirit among Jews.

Smolenskin did praise Pinsker for one thing in particular, however: "But such words had not been heard in German ever since Jews started speaking and writing, since the rise of their spirit until our days. For the fathers of the [German] Haskalah, German has been the holy of holies, and their history is that of the attempt to silence Israel among the gentiles, to have its memories sunk in oblivion, its temples of glory destroyed."<sup>110</sup> Smolenskin saw Pinsker's text as paving an alternative path for the German language in Jewish life. For Smolenskin, German had been tightly bound up with the work of destruction because of the way it served the ideology of assimilation and the decay of the Hebrew language. According to Smolenskin, those trying to speak to German Jews with a request to save Israel and its spirit had been ignored. Now, however, Pinsker used German in a new way. *Autoemancipation!* was no less than "a powerful key to open sealed gates," for the writer expressed his ideas in a language that was clear to those "obtuse and merciless and deaf people," and, what is more, "in a truly beautiful and wonderful language."<sup>111</sup> Smolenskin asserted that "the main thing" was that Pinsker had "proclaimed in the German language the idea that we are a people and that we must pay heed to our existence by guaranteeing ourselves an asylum. And for this we praise the writer and express our gratitude."<sup>112</sup>

On the face of it, Pinsker's achievement lay, according to Smolenskin, in his ability to write a text that had brought the national call to the "deaf" German Jews. Smolenskin was nevertheless also appreciative of Pinsker's more ingenious achievement, namely the defilement of German Jews' "holy of holies," the language of assimilation. Smolenskin thus underlined the ideological divide in the Jewish world around the German Jewish Enlightenment and its historical legacy. He saw *Autoemancipation!* as a publication that, for

proponents of Jewish self-determination, served historical justice, marking a potential transition in the Jewish history of the German language.

### *After Autoemancipation!*

In early 1883, the German rabbi Isaac Rülff published a text in German (with a German and Hebrew title) dedicated to the author of *Autoemancipation!*, reiterating its message while also stressing the importance of Palestine to Jewish nationhood.<sup>113</sup> In the same year, Pinsker was appointed as president of Hibbat Zion, an umbrella organization for the different movements promoting Jewish emigration to Palestine.<sup>114</sup> His appointment contributed to the strengthening tie between Eastern and Western European Jewish nationalist circles. One of the outcomes of this process was the growing presence of German in the correspondence and writings of Jewish nationalists. This brought to the surface, however, the question of how to articulate the national message in a manner that would appeal to Western and Eastern audiences alike. Groups in the Russian Empire usually advocated ethno-national forms of self-determination and emigration to Palestine. Voices from the West were more moderate, focusing on the support of Jewish agricultural collectives in Palestine.

In a postscript to a Hebrew letter written in August 1884 by the Warsaw branch of Hibbat Zion and addressed to its Russian members, the authors noted: “We are sending this message to our brethren in the West and in Romania; hence we ask you to pay close attention to it. Obviously, it was written in a different tongue and in German, but without any change of content.”<sup>115</sup> This clarification suggested that the Russian-Jewish readership might have been suspicious about a possible change of message in the letter’s German version. It turned out, within three months, that such suspicions were not unwarranted. Representatives of the movement convened their first major conference in Kattowitz, Germany. The invitations and official protocols were printed in both Hebrew and German, and were sent to Jewish communities around Europe. The Kattowitz conference helped establish the organizational foundations of the Jewish national movement and facilitated coordination between Eastern and Western groups.

Shortly after the publication of the conference protocols in early 1885, the Galician Hebrew periodical *Ivri anokhi* published two articles pointing

out major discrepancies between the Hebrew and the German versions. The former included “most valuable words of which no trace is to be found in the German version,” in addition to “parts from the German version that do not appear at all in the Hebrew version!”<sup>116</sup> The author of the article did not ascribe the differences to poor translation, but rather suspected that they were the result of a calculated strategy: the conference was held mostly in German, but the writer of the Hebrew version decided “to conceal from the non-German speaking Jews—who are the majority in Russia and Romania—various things that are remote from the national spirit, and also to insert words of national revival and excitement that the speakers had never considered uttering.”<sup>117</sup> The author cited examples chiefly from Pinsker’s speech, who, according to the German version, had said, “We have come here from many lands,” whereas in the Hebrew version, he had supposedly declared, “We have come here in the name of God, who loves the gates of Zion.”<sup>118</sup> In the German version, Pinsker was quoted as saying that “we naturally ought to help any Jew earn his living anywhere,” whereas in the Hebrew version his words turned into a commitment to help “any Jew who wants to work in the Holy Land.”<sup>119</sup>

Pinsker learned about the mistranslations (which were also reported in the German Jewish newspaper *Israelitische Wochenschrift*) and demanded the publication of a corrected version of his speech. In response to Pinsker’s request for an explanation, Hibbat Zion member Isidor Yasinowski insisted that these were honest mistakes committed by one of the attendees who “did not manage to translate several words and even sentences from your speech.”<sup>120</sup> He further explained that “a large portion of the inaccuracies in the Hebrew version stems from the difficulty of translating from German—a modern European language—into Hebrew, an ancient Oriental language.” In another letter, one of the organizers of the conference insisted that a deliberate manipulation of the version had not taken place: “We could not have misled the German-speaking Jews who attended the conference. We also could not have possibly deceived the Russian-speaking Jews, because an equal number of German and Hebrew protocols were sent to every town in Russia. German is comprehensible to many Jews, and there is almost no corner of Russia where you would not find a Jew who understands German.”<sup>121</sup>

In a letter to Pinsker in February 1885, Yasinowski raised concerns that the idea might take root that they “wrote two versions for two audiences.”<sup>122</sup> The debate died down after Hibbat Zion member Shaul Pinhas Rabinovich published a clarification in two leading Hebrew periodicals, asserting that the Hebrew version had been composed before the German one, and that neither was a translation of the other. He added that it was only in Pinsker’s speech that certain “stylistic changes” had been made because of “the special style of Hebrew euphuism [*melitsab*], which is, as is well known, remote from the German one”; he further guaranteed that corrections would be sent to members of the organization.<sup>123</sup> Thus, while German acquired a central place in Jewish political activism, it nevertheless continued to be burdened by earlier ideological tensions regarding the kind of ideas it carried in Jewish society. According to the critique leveled by those German-reading Jewish nationalists, German had been utilized to transmit liberal ideas and pragmatic political approaches, whereas Hebrew transmitted a more radical message, backed by religious terminology.

The symbolic division between Hebrew and German was never static, however, and was challenged not only in Russia but also in Central European Jewish circles. Pinsker and his pamphlet strongly influenced the Vienna-based Jewish student association Kadimah (the Hebrew word for “forward” as well as “eastward”), and in 1885 its cofounder, Nathan Birnbaum, established the journal *Selbst-Emancipation*.<sup>124</sup> The title alluded to Pinsker’s pamphlet, translating the Greco-Latin *auto* into the German *Selbst*. The journal soon became a major site of discussion between Eastern and Western Jewish activists. The question of Jewish emigration reemerged in the early 1890s, amid further degradation in the economic and political condition of Russian Jews.<sup>125</sup> This time, however, a greater number of texts written by Jewish activists were published in German: for example, a Russian Jew published anonymously in 1891 a German-language pamphlet that called on European Jews to help the fleeing masses.<sup>126</sup> In February 1892, in a bilingual appeal by the editors of *Selbst-Emancipation* urging sympathizers of the Jewish national idea to support the journal, the authors stressed that it was fighting assimilation by using the German language, “which is currently at the forefront with regard to our brethren in Europe” (fig. 4).<sup>127</sup> By the time Theodor Herzl’s *Der Judenstaat* appeared in 1896, German had already become a major vehicle of Jewish nationalism.



## Aufruf II.

An alle Freunde Zions!

Unser erster Aufruf hat Euch im Allgemeinen gesagt, was wir wollen. Nun beabsichtigen wir, Euch Punkt für Punkt unseres Programmes vorzuführen und Euch um Euer Mithilfe bei Durchführung desselben zu bitten.

Das Endziel der zionistischen Bewegung ist bekanntlich — ein nationales jüdisches Gemeinwesen auf agricultueller Grundlage in Palästina. Auf dem Wege zu diesem Ziele liegen viele Hindernisse, welche sich aber im Grossen und Ganzen nach zwei Seiten hin gruppieren: Schwierigkeiten, welche ausserhalb unseres Volkes liegen, und solche, welche in ihm ruhen. Mit beiden Factoren muss gerechnet werden.

Was die äusseren Schwierigkeiten betrifft, so sind dies jene Widerstände, welche sich auf weltpolitischem Gebiete gegen unser Werk erheben, und die zu beseitigen wir die geeigneten und genügenden Mittel finden müssen.

Bei weitem ernster sind jedoch die Hindernisse, welche das gegenwärtige Verhalten Israels selbst verursacht.

Ein Vaterland fällt Völkern, die es nicht ererbt haben, nicht in den Schooss; es will ersehnt, es will gesucht sein. Wir müssen daher unserem ganzen Volk den glühenden unausslöschlichen Wunsch einflössen, sich ein Heim zu schaffen.

Wie soll dies vollbracht werden?

### Durch Agitation!

Keine Gelegenheit darf verpasst werden, keine geeigneter Augenblick verpasst werden, keine Ausgabedarf zu hoch sein, um auf das Volk zu wirken, um es zu gewinnen. In tausenden Gestalten muss die Erlösungssehnsucht und Erlösungshoffnung in die Massen des Judenthums getragen werden. So mannigfaltig aber diese Formen sein mögen, sie lassen sich alle in einige Hauptkategorien zusammenfassen:

So ist ein kostbares Agitationsmittel — und vorläufig nur das — die praktische Colonisations-thätigkeit. Sie muss ausserst vorsichtig und wenig anspruchsvoll betrieben werden, aber sie soll nichtsdestoweniger mit reichlichen Mitteln arbeiten, da nur solche den Erfolg verbürgen.

Ein werthvolles Agitationsmittel — ebenfalls später herufen, Selbstzweck zu werden — ist ferner die Verbreitung der Kenntnis der hebräischen Sprache. Auf diesem Gebiete muss eine namhafte Thätigkeit entfaltet werden. Schulen und Bücher müssen in genügender Menge zur Verfügung stehen, um den dem Judenthum noch einiger-massen Anhänglichen Gelegenheit zu bieten, die hebräische Sprache zu erlernen. Der Geist dieser Sprache, welcher identisch ist mit unserem Volksgeiste, wird dann Hunderte und Tausende für unsere Ideale erziehen, er wird uns neue Kämpferschaaren zuführen. In ähnlicher Absicht und auf ähnliche Weise muss die Kenntnis der jüdischen Geschichte unter den Juden verallgemeinert werden. Auch sie, die ruhmvolle Geschichte unseres Stammes kann die Söhne desselben zum Kampf für das nationale Ziel erziehen und begeistern.

## קול קירא (ב)

לכל חובבי ציון

במקוריותאנו הראשון הנדני לכם בכלל מה הוא מנתנו ואל מה אנתנו נושאים את נפשנו. עתה ברצוננו להעביר לפניכם את כל פרטי הפרטים שלנו ולבקשכם אחים יקרים, להיות בעזרתנו להוציא מכל אלה הפעול.

תכלית התנועה הציונית מודעת — ערה עבריה לאומית, אשר יסודותיה עבודה אדמה בארץ ישראל, על הדרך המובילה אל התכלית הזאת מנוחים מעצורים ומכשולים רבים, אשר בכללם יפרו לשני ראשים: מעצורים מחוץ ומעצורים מקום. ועלינו להביא את שניהם בחשבון ברור ואמתי. מה שנוגע להמכשולים מחוץ אשר מקורם על שדה הפוליטיקה הכללית, העומדים לנו לשמן על דרכנו — עלינו למצוא החבולות ואמצעים ראויים, נכונים ומספיקים להגות אותם ממסללנו הלאה.

יהי שאת יותר עז להמכשולים אשר סבתם ישראל בעצמו. איך מולדת לא תפיל לחוק העמים לחבר אם לא תחלוק, על העם לשאף ולהתאחד אליה. לבקשה ולחור אחריה, לכן עלינו לפתח בכך עמנו רוח השוקה בעזרת כח כמנות לו בית, ואין נעשה את הדבר הזה עשה שלמה? על ידי האגסציון!

החילה לנו להעלים עינינו מכל מקרה ומאדע אשר נוכל להשתמש בו לתועלת רעיונו. החילה לנו לזנו בשעת הכושר, כל דין אל יהיה ויקר בעינינו במקום אשר נוכל לפעול על עמנו ולקנות את לבנו. כאלפי החבולות ואופנים צריכים אנתנו לשעת בלב כל אחינו את החשוקה העזה והתקנה הקנאל, התחבולות והאופנים האלה לא יאריך קץ מהם. אך אנתנו נבחר לנו מידם את היותר טובים ונאמנים.

יסוד האגסציון בארץ ישראל הוא התחבולת אגסציונית — לעת עתה רק זאת — נעלה ויקרה במאד. כוהדות ויתרה וכמחנותי ראייה לעינינו כוח צריכים אנתנו להשתמש בתחבולה זאת, אבל גם היא דורשת כסף רב, כי רק באופן כזה יעשה תושבו חיל.

את התחבולות האגסציון היותר מוסדות ונכונות — העתידה והשנה להיות גם תכלית בפני עצמה — היא הרחבת שפת עבר. המקצוע הזה דורש עבודה רבה, בתו ספרים וספרים צריכים להיות נכונים בכל עת לעזרתנו במדה מרובה. למען נקלעל כל אחד מאחזינו ללמוד את השפה העברית. רוח השפה הזאת שדוא רוח עמנו יעורר כלב רבים את האהבה לארצנו — משאת נפשנו ויכרא לנו שפעת ירחמים חדשים בעד רעיונו הקדושים. התכלית זו ובאופן כזה צריכים אנתנו לעשות גם את דברי ימינו לקנין כללי להענין עמנו. תולדתנו הנעלה והנשגבה יכולה להנך ולעורר את בנינו למלחמה בעד מטרם לאומית.

FIGURE 4. Appeal by Nathan Birnbaum and Ruben Brainin, February 7, 1892.  
From Ahad Ha-Am Archives, National Library of Israel, ARC.4\* 791 7 1887.  
Photograph courtesy of National Library of Israel.



In the last decades of the nineteenth century, then, German was not only the language of the German nation but also a universal language of science, politics, and philosophy. In the Jewish world, it continued to maintain many of its associations as the language of modernization and secularization. Jewish national activists searched for ways to create a discourse of social agitation and mobilization that would also reach higher echelons of Jewish and European societies. Pinsker's language choice, while driven by immediate hopes to reach a Western audience, proved a critical juncture in Jewish language politics. It challenged the discursive terms and divisions of Jewish politics in Europe, subverted the religious dimension of the national question in Eastern European Jewish societies, and aligned the Jewish national cause with European debates in the age of territorial nationalism and multiethnic empires. A "Russian Jew" turned out to be better suited than his Western counterparts to make German the language of transnational Jewish politics. The question remained open, however, how Jewish nationalists should advance the Hebrew language and what the role would be of the German language in that process. The next chapter examines these questions.

## THE LANGUAGE OF KNOWLEDGE

### *Early Hebraism and German*

Late nineteenth-century Hebraism—the movement to promote Hebrew language and culture within a Jewish national framework—was shaped by the multilingual condition of diaspora Jewry. The terminology, premises, and ideological contours of discussions on Hebrew’s status in Jewish life took shape through a complex interaction between different cultural and linguistic environments. The German language had a crucial place in this process. Proponents of Hebraism in Central and Eastern Europe found in German a familiar, powerful, yet politically loaded model. Late nineteenth-century Hebraists who sought to solidify Hebrew’s status as a modern national language had to address its close entanglement with the German language, chiefly in the interwoven realms of science and secularization.

This chapter recounts leading Hebraists’ assessments of German’s place in Jewish culture and in Jewish nationalism. I begin with Perets Smolenskin, the chief critic of German Jewry in early Jewish nationalism. I argue that in his Hebraist writings from the 1860s and 1870s Smolenskin attempted to separate German’s function as a language of knowledge from its association with German nationhood. I then turn to Nahum Sokolow, a leading voice of the 1880s Hebrew press, who advocated a complementary division between Hebrew and German in the endeavor to vitalize Hebrew culture. The chapter ends with Hebraists’ stance following the formation of the Zionist movement in the late 1890s with German serving as its lingua franca. Ideological

quarrels within the movement brought to the surface the historical tensions around German's place in Jewish societies but also mirrored its critical role in promoting Hebraism and the Jewish national agenda.

Seeking to reconfigure the relation between the two languages, Hebraists mobilized a range of prevalent notions around the divide between Eastern and Western Jewries— notions that hitherto had been often operative in Jewish discourses on Yiddish and Yiddish-speaking Jews. They assessed in different ways the extant and aspired status of German vis-à-vis Hebrew, responding to different political developments in Jewish and European politics. A certain ambivalence nevertheless persisted: German had played a significant role in the introduction of modern scholarly, secular, and political ideas into Jewish societies—all of which were central to Hebraist ideology. In the Hebraists' effort to advance their cause, German's ubiquity in the Jewish world appeared as both an obstacle and an invaluable vehicle.

### Perets Smolenskin and the Nationalization of the Hebrew Language

Echoing nationalist movements emerging in Central and Eastern Europe, certain maskilim argued in the late 1860s that Jews constituted a nation whose ultimate vehicle of expression was Hebrew. The most prolific and popular writer associated with this agenda was Perets Smolenskin. Born in 1842 to a traditional family in Belarus, he spent six years in Odessa in the 1860s, where he became acquainted with Western-leaning, secular Jewish circles. In 1868 he settled in Vienna, where he edited the Hebrew monthly *Ha-Shahar* until his death in 1885.

*Ha-Shahar* included various articles, reviews, and stories—a large proportion written by Smolenskin himself—that advocated the Jewish national cause while locating it within broader European political and cultural developments. It was the single most influential and popular Hebrew periodical during the 1870s, disseminated in the Russian Empire (often clandestinely, because of censorship restrictions) as well as among Jewish scholars in Western Europe. In the following decades, Jewish scholars and national activists would describe Smolenskin as “a father and patron of Hebrew literature,” “the founder of Hebrew journalism,” and “the father of the Hebrew national idea.”<sup>1</sup> Smolenskin was highly critical of Orthodox and Hasidic Judaism,

repudiating its alleged fanatical and backward-looking principles. He underscored the spiritual content of Judaism—its scriptures, cultural tradition, ethics, and fraternal feelings—as the core that makes Judaism a nation and not merely a religion.<sup>2</sup> Hebrew was a pivotal element of Jews' national self-consciousness, as it was the only surviving remnant of Jewish national unity and the harbinger of Jewish cultural revival.<sup>3</sup> Smolenskin's ideological opponent in this context was not the rabbinic authorities but rather modern German Jewry and its adherents in Eastern European Jewish societies. German Jews' neglect of Hebrew in favor of German represented, for Smolenskin, their withdrawal from the pillars of Judaism in the myopic hope of recognition from broader society.<sup>4</sup>

That Smolenskin resided in the Habsburg Empire's capital city was significant.<sup>5</sup> During the 1860s, national movements across the empire demanded the advancement of national rights, drawing on ethnic-linguistic categories of nationhood. The Austrian constitution, introduced as part of the 1867 settlement (*Ausgleich*), recognized the right of "ethnic peoples" (*Volksstämme*) to cultivate their nationality and culture.<sup>6</sup> In this context, differentiation between languages—both linguistically and ideologically—became a chief imperative of nationalist scholars and activists. Educational, scientific, and cultural institutions were established in order to contest the hegemony of German-language institutions.<sup>7</sup> Scholars in different parts of the empire developed scientific vernaculars and published encyclopedias and textbooks in their national languages.<sup>8</sup>

Smolenskin's Hebraism took shape against this background. He argued in 1868 that, like members of other nations, Jews, too, should study, teach, and elevate their national language. Referring to "the situation of different nations in our days," Smolenskin declared that language was the chief vehicle for national unity, as "the strength of language is greater than the strength of belief."<sup>9</sup> Hebrew should gradually but persistently acquire a central role in Jews' self-understanding, regaining its lost status as a venerable national language. However, Smolenskin found Hebraism to be different from other linguistic nationalisms. He believed that Jews should not degrade or renounce other languages, and indeed ought to remain "loyal citizens in our countries of dispersal."<sup>10</sup> Taking heed of Hebrew's theological distinctiveness, as well as the absence of a territorially marked, Hebrew-speaking community, he did

not argue that Hebrew must become an ordinary vernacular. Smolenskin's Hebraism was inspired by the advent of nationalism while adapted to Jews' particular political and cultural condition. Still, his writings asserted Hebrew's ability to unite Jews and to serve as a modern language of knowledge.

This political background serves as a useful starting point for examining Smolenskin's Hebraism and his view of the German language. Studies of Smolenskin have emphasized his adherence to a modern understanding of the Jewish collective and the fundamental role of Hebrew in his worldview. His "anti-German" line has come into view as a radical and at times excessive assault on German Jewry and the social processes it had been undergoing, yet ultimately congruent with his nationalist perspective.<sup>11</sup> Isaac Barzilay argued that Smolenskin's critique has to be understood as part of a political struggle that Eastern European maskilim waged in an attempt to challenge the cultural and political hegemony of German Jewry.<sup>12</sup> Though attentive to Smolenskin's ambivalent approach to German culture, Barzilay concluded that Smolenskin took up the position of a "revolutionary reformer" at the expense of logical and ideological coherence.<sup>13</sup> I would suggest, however, that Smolenskin's approach to German was not a mere aberration from his nationalist framework. Rather, it reflected a challenge with which early Jewish nationalists grappled intensively, namely the attempt to champion modern Jewish nationhood while construing it as complying with their states' political order.

For Smolenskin, the admiration among Jews for Mendelssohn and the German Haskalah was detrimental to Jewish national aspirations. In his view, Mendelssohn had kindled a process that led ultimately to the loss of Jewish vitality in the West, to conversion, and to alienation from Jewish collectivity. Driven by their subjugation to German culture, the Berlin Haskalah and its disciples contributed to Hebrew's decline and to Jews' withdrawal from their spiritual roots. In his essays "Eternal People" (1872) and "A Time to Plant" (1875–1877), Smolenskin criticized Mendelssohn's German translation of the Pentateuch, arguing that he had made the Holy Scriptures, "the object of spiritual rejoicing for the House of Israel, the treasure of its faith," into "a servant for the German language!"<sup>14</sup>

According to Smolenskin, Mendelssohn's translation did not merely introduce the Scripture to those who had not mastered Hebrew but also pushed Jews away from Hebrew.<sup>15</sup> This undermined Jews' sense of solidarity

and integrity as a nation: "For two thousand years their fathers and ancestors were killed and burnt and risked their lives so as to save the Holy Scriptures, only to become in the end of days servants to the German language."<sup>16</sup> Mendelssohn's deed was thus an affront both to Judaism's holy of holies, the Hebrew Bible, but also to the "honor of his fathers." German Jews "started immediately not only to leave the Torah but also to reject it and the Hebrew language, priding themselves on not knowing Hebrew, deeming it shameful to hear a person using it."<sup>17</sup>

Mendelssohn's influence, according to Smolenskin, passed beyond the German lands: "Almost throughout Europe those who searched for knowledge followed in the footsteps of those from Berlin." The language most spoken among Jews in the majority of these areas was "distorted German"—namely Yiddish, the speakers of which readily learned German, "and in any place in which the word of Mendelssohn arrived, the German language blossomed and the Hebrew language sunk deep, thus allowing love for the nation and for unity to pass as a shadow."<sup>18</sup> Smolenskin deployed a historical equation in which the decline of Hebrew and the rise of German were interrelated, a process brought about by the eastward movement of the ideas of the Berlin Haskalah.

Smolenskin's negative judgment of the Berlin Haskalah was highly controversial, yet it made an impact on various Eastern European Jewish nationalist circles.<sup>19</sup> The Russian maskil Shai Hurwitz described Mendelssohn's translation as a "grave mistake" that had caused perplexity and loss of way among European Jews.<sup>20</sup> The Galician writer Yehuda Leib Landa argued that the Berlin Haskalah had used Hebrew "to preach and teach in it and on its behalf, but for what purpose? To decrease the number of readers in this language and to crown in its stead the superior language in their eyes, the language of enlightenment, the language of the greatest poets, the German language."<sup>21</sup>

Smolenskin's view was unique insofar as it defied common discursive divisions. He sided with the traditional rabbinic critique of Mendelssohn's translation while depicting its menace as the breaking of the Jewish emotional and political bond. The Russian maskil Avraham Ber Gottlober, who led the opposition to Smolenskin's attack on Mendelssohn, remarked in one of his essays that the words with which Smolenskin criticized Mendelssohn

would have been less outrageous had they been made “by a man with a grown beard and who puts on Tefillin every day.”<sup>22</sup> The Bible’s importance for Smolenskin lay not in its theological significance per se but in what it represented from a national point of view. His approach to Hebrew reflected these ideological premises. Although he was not envisioning a sweeping revival of Hebrew as a spoken language, Smolenskin supported its measured expansion to reflect faithfully the cultural spirit of Judaism in the present day. This was also one of the motives behind his frequent publication of Hebrew translations of modern, scientific content.

A telling example of *Ha-Shahar*’s ambivalent approach to German appears in a text published in 1873. Romanian scholar Haim Yaakov Korn presented a sermon delivered by sixteen-year-old Moses Gaster, who was to become a renowned scholar of Romanian and Jewish folklore and linguistics, as well as a leading figure in Romanian and British Zionism. The text was written in eloquent German and embellished with citations from Hebrew sources. In his afterword, Korn stated that in publishing the sermon his goal had been not only to inspire the youth of his country but also to demonstrate that “only through the German language will we bring our sons to enlightenment. Those who say, ‘let us make our sons Romanian’ are corrupting their seed.” Korn explicitly laid out the superior role of German and the doors it opened to adolescent Jews on their path to knowledge. Yet his concluding sentence balanced this superiority vis-à-vis Hebrew: “Only by making German and Hebrew the cornerstones of their knowledge, while not abandoning Romanian, will they be sure to have not devoted their time to study in vain.”<sup>23</sup> *Ha-Shahar*’s “anti-Germanism” did not entail a simple rejection of the German language but rather envisaged a new conjuncture of its status in the Jewish world.<sup>24</sup> Although German’s role as the language of the empire and a language of knowledge would be maintained, it would not encroach on Hebrew’s status as a vehicle of national and spiritual unity.

Notwithstanding his adherence to Habsburg categories of national rights, Smolenskin also adopted features of German national thought, chiefly in his discussions of Luther. According to a common trope in German thought since the eighteenth century, Luther was a spiritual and ideological forerunner of the Enlightenment. In the nineteenth century, thinkers and scholars such as Jakob Grimm and Leopold von Ranke presented Luther as a

founding father of the German nation. In this narrative, his translation of the Bible was a defining moment in Germany's cultural and political evolution.<sup>25</sup> Smolenskin echoed these views while relating them to the experience of Jews at the present.<sup>26</sup> In his essay "A Time to Act" (1873), in which he called on Jews to foster their national self-understanding through the acquisition of knowledge, Smolenskin noted how "in seeking to break the arm of the Pope in Rome," Luther "translated the holy texts into the language of his people, so that they could see what God seeks from his people." As soon as the Germans and other peoples understood the roots of their faith, "they no longer listened to those telling lies on their behalf." This, Smolenskin asserted, was a turn of which the Jewish people was in desperate need: "We, who have no priests nor lawgivers of faith, where each sees himself as a priest, we, that all of our faith is in the Holy Scriptures, we need all the more to know the words of faith in order to remove the superstitions from the hearts of the people."<sup>27</sup> Smolenskin thus identified the Reformation and the German translation of the Scriptures as a historical model to inspire Jews in his own day. Like Germans, Jews needed to discover the truth of their founding texts by rediscovering the Scriptures and by cultivating the Hebrew language. This, Smolenskin envisioned, would bring about a transformation that would lead Jews to knowledge and self-reliance and would weaken traditional authorities.

In "A Time to Plant," Smolenskin described Luther's reformist actions as a "new path for belief, which enabled knowledge and inquiry to rise." And it was through knowledge, too, that "a light started to shine on Israel."<sup>28</sup> While criticizing Luther's radicalism, as well as his anti-Jewish rhetoric ("like all Catholic priests preceding him"), Smolenskin was appreciative of "his great deeds for the people," following which "knowledge started blossoming and truth emerged and the arms of religious fanaticism fell in its battles." Whether or not Luther had foreseen the consequences of his actions, he nevertheless achieved his goals "by translating the Holy Texts and giving them to the entire people." For that, Smolenskin added, "We Jews should also bless his name, for despite the hatred he uttered against us, he had lifted the precious stones with which we could reach glory among the nations."<sup>29</sup>

Smolenskin contrasted the positive change that Luther's actions brought about with the negative impact of Mendelssohn's. In this regard,



he undermined the view of Mendelssohn as a visionary who had released Hebrew from its religious confines.<sup>30</sup> This latter idea had been dominant in Eastern European maskilic debates and was circulating in German Jewish thought and literature as well.<sup>31</sup> Smolenskin held that Mendelssohn had challenged not only rabbinic Judaism but also the dominant role of Hebrew in Jewish history. For Smolenskin, Hebrew's significance was not restricted to its religious function; it pertained to Jews' history as a nation. This idea would be increasingly employed in the efforts of Jewish nationalists to capitalize on Judaism's religious and spiritual resources while defying the supremacy of ancient Jewish law.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, Smolenskin leveled this criticism mainly at Western, assimilated Jews who had neglected the Hebrew language. It was therefore in its opposition to the national status of Hebrew that he deemed German to be potentially harmful, as it put into question the indispensability of Hebrew to the Jewish nation.

### German and the Prospect of Modern Hebrew Scholarship

Smolenskin's critical engagement with the history of modern German Jewry had—as Shmuel Feiner has suggested—a prescriptive dimension, seeking to shape his readership's national proclivities.<sup>33</sup> German's manifold functions in Smolenskin's account mirrored his ambivalent approach to Germany and German Jewry's role in the modernization of European Jewry. This ambivalence grew stronger when Smolenskin addressed the question of scientific writing. One of *Ha-Shahar*'s main goals was to make the audience better informed on intellectual and scientific matters.<sup>34</sup> This was also the exclaimed purpose of another, weekly Hebrew newspaper, which Smolenskin published in 1878, *Ha-Mabit* ("The Observer"). Avoiding the polemicist tone of *Ha-Shahar*, Smolenskin devoted this periodical to light, accessible pieces on world politics, nature, technology, and psychology, as well as short stories.

The matter of knowledge, however, also loomed large in *Ha-Shahar*. Its Hebrew subtitle was *Spreading Light on the Paths of the Israelites in the Past and Present*. On the German cover, the subtitle employed German maskilic rhetoric: *A Hebrew Medium for Science, Education, and Life* (*Hebräisches Organ für Wissenschaft, Bildung und Leben*). *Ha-Shahar*'s German cover likely targeted the Habsburg authorities, framing the use of Hebrew as a means to attain higher, nonsectarian goals. Yet it also speaks to Smolenskin's identifica-

tion with certain German liberal pedagogical values that played an important role in Smolenskin's Hebraism. This could be demonstrated by examining his view of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

In an 1869 article, Smolenskin ascribed German Jews' critical studies of the Scriptures to a proclivity for imitation and self-deprecation: "when critics came to scrutinize the Holy Texts and distorted their meaning due to lack of understanding, the Jewish critics followed suit, competing in this activity until it became a praised deed to distort the texts as much as possible."<sup>35</sup> Elsewhere, he wrote that German Jewish scholars—including rabbis—were "full of contempt for the Hebrew language."<sup>36</sup> What is more, Smolenskin reprimanded German Jewish scholars for their belief that German "is great enough to erect a shrine for our knowledge, just as the Hebrew language did."<sup>37</sup> According to Smolenskin, some of them stubbornly maintained that "German would be the heir of the dead Hebrew language." He criticized their tendency to write Jewish scholarship in any language other than the one which "all of Israel would understand."<sup>38</sup> Only in Hebrew, he posited, could those erudite in the Torah assess the scholarship's veracity.

In a review of Heinrich Graetz's study of the Song of Songs, Smolenskin rejected Graetz's interpretation, ascribing to it tendencies of German Biblical criticism.<sup>39</sup> Whereas German-speaking writers had praised Graetz's book, Smolenskin believed that it should irritate every Hebrew reader.<sup>40</sup> He criticized Graetz for overlooking essential research in Hebrew in favor of "Renan, Zeckler, and Meyer." According to Smolenskin, Graetz offered "nothing new, no truthful judgment, no knowledge of the Hebrew language, nor a desire to understand its ways."<sup>41</sup> Smolenskin thus correlated Graetz's inadequate knowledge of Hebrew "and its ways" with his flawed interpretation.

Smolenskin's Hebraist convictions notwithstanding, he praised the role German was playing in the dissemination of knowledge. In a review of a book written by Adolf Jellinek, a leading Viennese reform Rabbi, Smolenskin distinguished between the different purposes of Jewish studies: "A history of the Jewish people written in Hebrew should be as accurate as possible. But when written in the languages of the peoples, it should also be of benefit."<sup>42</sup> Following this distinction, he stated that Jellinek's book appeared to be most valuable even though he "did not agree with the author on many issues."<sup>43</sup> The value Smolenskin found in Jewish books written in German

consisted in their “erasing the disgrace from Israel and raising its dignity.” This was in contrast to texts in Hebrew, which “do not make any use of flattery” and must be accurate. Another review, published anonymously in *Ha-Shahar*, discussed a book on the Semitic peoples, written in German by the Russian Jewish orientalist Daniil Khvolson. The reviewer argued that “Jew-haters have started recently to disguise themselves in the costume of science and research in their endeavor to degrade us,” referring chiefly to studies published in Germany and France on the roots of monotheism.<sup>44</sup> In this sense, Khvolson’s German publication did scholarly but also political service to the Jewish national cause.<sup>45</sup>

In *Ha-Shahar* Smolenskin thus gave expression to a dual approach to scholarship written in German. On the one hand, he perceived the attempt to build a corpus of scientific knowledge of Judaism in German as jeopardizing Jewish collectivity. On the other hand, he acknowledged the invaluable political importance of this very scholarship. Smolenskin admitted that Hebrew could reach every part of the Jewish people, yet a history book such as Graetz’s *History of the Jews* “could give respect and glory for the people much more than thousands of public praises.”<sup>46</sup> Smolenskin attacked fervently the linguistic choices of German Jewish scholars but conceded that the Jewish national call could not be promoted effectively without the use of German, as demonstrated in his review of *Autoemancipation!* (discussed in the previous chapter). His emphatic invocation of the functionality of German alongside fierce ideological critique of its status in the Jewish world captures a distinct feature of modern Jewish polemics. Similar to how maskilim and Zionists used Yiddish extensively because of its practical and political value while negating its very legitimacy and deriding its aesthetic value,<sup>47</sup> Jewish nationalists since Smolenskin waged a battle against the centrality of German in Jewish society but deemed it necessary to utilize its intellectual and political prowess.

In the aftermath of the 1881–1882 pogroms, a new generation of writers and publicists addressed with growing urgency questions of antisemitism, Jewish self-determination, and the cultural politics of Jewish nationalism. The issue of mass emigration became the anchor of Jewish political debates, channeled through a range of organized political groups.<sup>48</sup> Smolenskin, who during the 1870s was skeptical as to the prospect of organized mass Jewish

immigration to Palestine, changed his position in the early 1880s and advocated political and diplomatic work for that purpose. He even contemplated establishing a journal in German (to be entitled *Palästina*) to promote the cause.<sup>49</sup> Smolenskin was also involved in the establishment of the Viennese Jewish nationalist student group Kadimah, which viewed Palestine as the desired goal for Jewish immigration. One of Kadimah's cofounders, Nathan Birnbaum, edited the periodical *Selbst-Emancipation*, which internalized part of Smolenskin's ideological line and published German translations of some of his stories. *Selbst-Emancipation* also published pieces on Hebrew language, culture, and history; translations of Hebrew stories, poems, and lectures; and riddles and games that revolved around basic knowledge of Hebrew words and letters as well as Jewish historical figures (fig. 5).<sup>50</sup> As noted in Chapter 2, *Selbst-Emancipation* reflected the leaning of 1880s Jewish nationalist circles toward increased engagement and interaction between Eastern and Western Jewries. Part of this interaction involved the exchange between bodies of Jewish knowledge produced in Hebrew and German.

In Poland, one of the main Hebrew publicists and popular scientific writers was Nahum Sokolow, who advocated direct dialogue and cooperation among liberal, religious, and nationalist strands across the Jewish world and outside of it.<sup>51</sup> Sokolow was a devoted reader of *Ha-Shahar* in his youth, saw Smolenskin as a precursor of Jewish nationalism, and praised his devotion to the Hebrew language. In 1878, Sokolow wrote a few pieces on popular science for Smolenskin's *Ha-Mabit*. In the early 1880s, Sokolow and Smolenskin parted ways over their differing orientations on Jewish nationalism. Smolenskin advocated immigration and withdrawal from political effort in Jews' countries of residence, and he perceived anti-Judaism as so deeply ingrained in non-Jewish society to be virtually undefeatable. Sokolow, in contrast, defended the liberal drive to promote the integration of Jews into broader society while also nourishing a modern, national, Jewish self-understanding. Nonetheless, in later years Sokolow wrote about Smolenskin with seeming fondness.<sup>52</sup> In 1884, he established a widely circulated Hebrew annual, *Ha-Asif*, encompassing politics and popular science, reviews of recent scholarship, literature, and poetry. He hoped the annual would convey "the spirit of love of Torah and science" and offer "moderate critique" of contemporary Jewish concerns.<sup>53</sup>

# Selbst-Emancipation!

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für die

nationalen, sozialen und politischen Interessen des  
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Erscheint zu Anfang und Mitte jedes Monats.

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## Weltbürgerthum.

„Wer ist wider uns?“, nicht ein Feind, sondern verschiedene mächtige Gegner stehen unserer nationalen Kampfergeist gegenüber. Wir theilen die Widerwärtigkeit des jüdischen Volkstums gewöhnlich in innere und äußere ein, vergessen aber dabei, daß diese beiden Hauptarten noch in Unterabtheilungen zerfallen, die dadurch, daß sie eine verschiedene Bekämpfungswürde erfordern, unsere Aufgabe erschweren. Zudem wir nur die einzelnen Gruppen der äußeren Feinde des jüdischen Volkes, als da sind: eine

ationale, eine sociale, eine religiöse, eine instinctiv u. s. w., gänglich übergeben — unsere Leser wissen ja, daß unserer Meinung nach eine richtige innere Politik uns auch nach außen helfen würde, — wollen wir unsere Aufmerksamkeit nur unseren stammesgenössischen Gegnern zuwenden, und zwar diesmal speciell einer Gattung derselben. Da wir unsere Affinitäten, an deren Gefährlichkeit uns das vor einigen Tagen zu Ende gegangene Chanukah-Fest und der naheende Tawerung des 10. Tawoth zu mahnen geeignet sind, sonst einer ziemlich ausföhrlichen Besprechung würdigen, wollen wir für heute eine andere Kategorie von Gegnern, in den Bereich unserer Betrachtungen ziehen, nämlich die Kosmopoliten, zu deutsch: Weltbürger.

Die „Weltbürger“ sind Menschen, welche gewöhnlich einige Verse des Jesajas und einige Sprüche des neuen Testaments zu recitiren wissen, sodann diesen literarischen Autoritäten noch die großen wissenschaftlichen, wie Newton, Darwin, Franklin zugesellen, und damit sich die respectable Versammlung nicht langweile, auf derselben noch die Weltverbesserungslehre durch Casselle und Marx vertreten sein lassen. — Durch die grünnenden, friedengeschwängerten Messiassturen des Jesajas, auf denen die von den ersten Nazarenern gepredigte Feindesliebe zu finden ist, haften die völkerverbindenden Dampfwagen und von Stadt zu Stadt, von Dorf zu Dorf, in welchen ein glückseliges, in Gütergemeinschaft lebendes Geschlecht wohnt, zieht sich der völkerverbindende Draht. . . . So etwa sieht eine Landshaft der Welt aus, auf der die Weltbürger Wärgen sind. Auf der wirklichen Welt geht es freilich anders zu: Wohl trägt die Locomotive durch die Länder dieser Erde, wohl trägt der Telegraph die schneuzige Kunde im Nu durch laufende Meilen; alles das hat aber die Völker noch nicht verbunden, hat sie noch nicht befreundet, alles das hat die goldene Zeit des Jesajas noch nicht gebracht und hat die christliche Liebe noch nicht geboren.

Darüber, daß eine nationenlose Zeit noch nicht herangebrochen ist, wird Niemand im Unklaren sein. Sie müßte also erst herbeigeföhrt werden. Soll man dies versuchen? oder: Ist es einerseits ausföhrbar? andererseits erstrebenswerth? Die Kosmopoliten mühen es doch einmal unternehmen, der Sonne ein anderes Gesicht zu geben, nämlich sie alle

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University Library / Compact Memory.

Sokolow's approach to the realm of Jewish scientific writing in German mirrored this attitude. *Ha-Asif*'s first volume included an essay authored by Sokolow, proclaiming the necessity and intention to compose a "history of the Jews in the Hebrew language." In laying out his arguments, Sokolow first turned to the success of German Jewish historiography: "Our brethren in Germany have fared well in Jewish Studies, and after leaving the Hebrew literature and as they were starting to write in German, some well-known scholars have emerged and have written the history of the Jews: Zunz, Jost, Herzfeld, and Kassel paved the way, and the great researcher Graetz brought together what scholars and writers had achieved, and composed a great book that has remained an unmatched landmark until our days."<sup>54</sup> Sokolow lamented the "shameful" fact that "we do not have yet a book of the history of the Jews in the Hebrew language, . . . at least not in the magnitude of Graetz's books." He also dismissed the benefit of translating such works from German into Hebrew. In his view, they were suited to German Jewish pupils but were "of little worth for Hebrew readers, an audience with well-established minds and predispositions."<sup>55</sup> Sokolow then echoed Smolenskin's view regarding the essential division between German and Hebrew readerships, in particular around the latter's intellectual and ideological virtues. Different from Smolenskin, however, Sokolow did not directly reproach German Jewish scholars. He followed Smolenskin in his division between Jewish linguistic spheres but refrained from perceiving this division as jeopardizing Jewish spiritual integrity.

When addressing the realm of general knowledge, the qualitative difference between the readerships was reversed. In a review discussing a Hebrew translation of an encyclopedia of natural sciences written by German Jewish writer Aaron Bernstein for a lay audience, the reviewer praised the German people for succeeding "more than any other people" in disseminating knowledge and science. In Germany, he added, knowledge of nature is a public property: "Physics and chemistry are discussed publicly, every farmer knows the Copernican Model, and every coachman knows Newton's Laws." The reviewer asked rhetorically, "Aren't we in need of knowledge more than any other nation?"<sup>56</sup> In another volume, Sokolow reviewed a French journal for Jewish studies, stating, "The people of Israel and its science share one destiny." Just as the history of the Jewish people is unique, evincing falls and



risks, so is the history of its science. He described France as an example of a country in which Jewish scholarly work had known prosperity and great achievements—of which “no traces have remained.”<sup>57</sup> Sokolow contrasted the status of Jewish scholarships in France and Germany so as to pay tribute to the feats of the latter, which had been entwined with the German nation’s esteem.

Other Hebraists also addressed the question of how Hebrew’s role as a language of knowledge could be reconciled with the prolificness of German Jewish scholarship. Shai Hurwitz, who was directly influenced by Smolenskin’s criticism of the Berlin Haskalah,<sup>58</sup> published in 1887 a text celebrating the work of Nahman Krochmal, a Galician scholar whose Hebrew writings, inspired by Hegelian philosophy of history, gained wide attention among later Jewish scholars and political leaders. In his words of praise, and drawing on Leopold Zunz’s comments, Hurwitz depicted Krochmal as eliciting the achievements of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Since the days of Mendelssohn, the “era of the aesthetes,” as he termed it, Jewish scholarship had been deserted, “and its national language was relegated and was but an accursed slave for the dissemination of mundane knowledge with the goal of reaching the aesthetes of Japheth.” Since Krochmal, however, Jewish scholarship had again blossomed with Riesser, Philippson, Zunz, and Graetz, until it made the German language its instrument. These and other writers “treasured the valuable objects of the Jewish Bible . . . which have reached France, Italy, Russia,” thus encouraging further Jewish scholarship in Hebrew and other languages.<sup>59</sup>

Hurwitz used the work of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to elevate a forerunner of modern Hebrew scholarship. Moreover, he reconciled Western and Eastern Jewries by distinguishing between the impact of the Berlin Haskalah and nineteenth-century German Jewish scientific work. Curiously, Hurwitz employed Smolenskin’s description of Hebrew as a “slave” to German in the late eighteenth century, but he added a second historical stage of reversal of roles, as German became an instrument (*tashmish*) for nationally inclined Jewish scholars. Using religious terms and attributing a higher, national purpose to German Jewish scholarship, the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* acquired a historical role in the advent of Hebraism.

Hebraists also tackled questions of style and complexity when comparing between German and Hebrew scholarly corpuses. In a review of the Rus-

sian Hebrew journal *Ha-Mitspe*, Sokolow discussed scientific pieces written by Eastern European Hebrew scholars who had tried to apply historical and philosophical methods on questions of Jewish religion and history. Sokolow was skeptical as to their articles' comprehensibility, and he criticized the convolutedness of their reasoning. He accused one scholar of "over-philosophizing," and another of using "casuistry [*pilpul*]" on reaction and progress, civilization, cosmopolitanism and nationalism, [a casuistry that] is so high and so thin that it remains almost unreachable and could be torn apart by a light touch." He complained: "I read it once and could not understand it. I read it again and could not understand it. After the third reading I could understand it—but was left with a headache." In his conclusion, Sokolow noted that this was not merely a question of argumentation: "Not anything that could be written in German in a journal for the gentiles [*amim*] could also be written in a Hebrew journal for Israel. We with ours, they with theirs."<sup>60</sup> Sokolow employed here a saying from the Babylonian Talmud that referred to the distinction between those who recite the Torah and those who study it.<sup>61</sup>

Sokolow added a practical dimension to Hebraists' approach to German. He saw scholarly work in Hebrew as essential for promoting Jewish national culture while also accepting a necessary separation between the scientific capacities of German and Hebrew. Different from the approach he had propagated in the opening volume, Sokolow focused on Hebrew's inadequate ability to convey certain contents—both because of its readership's background and because of linguistic constraints. The Hebrew text that discussed abstract and sophisticated processes appeared, in Sokolow's account, as exercising the Talmudic rhetorical practice of *pilpul*. In this, Sokolow employed a common image of traditional Jewish scholarly practice that proved incompatible with modern scientific ways of pursuing knowledge. Sokolow thus implicitly accepted the division between Hebrew and German as essential.<sup>62</sup>

In *Ha-Asif's* fifth volume, published in 1889, Simon Bernfeld, a Galician scholar and the rabbi of Belgrade's Sephardic community, published a summary of three Festschriften marking the birthdays of renowned scholars. Wishing to present the summary to his readers "in our language," Bernfeld noted, "These books have been printed in Germany, where our literature has excelled both in terms of quality and quantity, but enjoys only a small



readership.” He added that “nature has divided its gifts lawfully and equally: the Germans *write* books, whereas we Slavs—*read* them.”<sup>63</sup> Bernfeld thus employed—and subverted—the image of the *Ostjude*, rendering it a positive vehicle in the formation of a modern corpus of Jewish knowledge. Implicitly, Bernfeld also presented German as an integral part of Eastern European Jews’ cultural landscape owing to their capacity as German-reading Jews. What is more, in his proposed division, “Slavic” Jews’ national proclivities and scholarly tradition counterbalanced German Jews’ limited interest in Jewish scholarship.

In his conclusion, Bernfeld asserted, “It seems that the scholars of Germany stand on the peak of the scientific view,” and he quoted Psalms (118:22): “The stone which the builders refused is become the cornerstone.”<sup>64</sup> In Psalms, the builders (who allegorically stand for the Israelites) reject the foundations of belief by throwing away the stone, but thereby, in a divine deed, lay the pillars for the building. Bernfeld thus ascribed religious significance to the sacrilegious stance of German Jewish scholars, turning them into valuable partners in the enterprise of reviving Jewish nationhood.

Bernfeld added that German Jewish scholarly achievements contributed greatly to the ability of Jews outside of Germany—he brought up Hungarian Jews as an example—to satisfy their curiosity and to draw them into exploring Jewish religion and culture. “While there are peoples who would rejoice in using their flawed goods and avoid bringing high-quality goods from the outside so as not to make other peoples richer,” this was not, according to Bernfeld, how Eastern European Jews were pursuing knowledge. For him, “When we seek to satisfy our spiritual needs, we make use of these [external goods] as well, until redemption comes and we do not need it any longer.”<sup>65</sup> This, too, made Jewish scholarly work in Germany valuable for the realization of Jewish national aspirations, despite its disparity from Hebrew language and scholarship. Bernfeld’s explanation relied on a religiously rooted motif of unintended contribution to the realization of greater collective aspirations, captured in the quote from Psalms. This motif would become central in twentieth-century religious Zionist theology.<sup>66</sup>

Smolenskin’s *Ha-Shahar* and Sokolow’s *Ha-Asif* mirror a process of transition in Jewish politics transpiring through the 1870s and 1880s. Breaking with a common trope in Eastern European Haskalah, Smolenskin at-

tacked the Berlin Haskalah because of what he saw as its lack of national self-determination and its proclivity for German culture. Nonetheless, his view also recognized German's political contribution to the promotion of the Jewish national cause. Sokolow's *Ha-Asif* offered a more reconciliatory approach toward the role of German in the dissemination of knowledge while carefully delimiting its realm of operation. It reinforced and appropriated the division between *Ostjuden* and *Westjuden*, and between Hebrew and German, while finding in the disparity between the two a potential basis for alliance. The approach developed in Hebrew periodicals recognized modern Jewry's debt to German as a language of knowledge while also maintaining a critical ideological distance from it.

### Hebraism in a German-Speaking Zionism

In the last quarter of the century, some German and Austrian nationalists deployed various cultural and racial categories aimed at distinguishing the German people from "foreign elements," often focusing on Jews.<sup>67</sup> Ideas of the German language's purity and Jews' alleged foreignness were part of these efforts to deny Jews' belonging to German society.<sup>68</sup> The German nationalist Wilhelm Marr published in 1879 the best-selling book *The Triumph of Judaism over Germanism*, in it describing in racial and social terms the German nation as having fallen victim to a process of "Judaization." Marr would later popularize the term *Antisemitismus*.<sup>69</sup>

Between 1879 and 1881 German Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals participated in a heated debate over Jews' capacity to be part of the German nation. The debate was triggered by the historian Heinrich von Treitschke's accusation that Jews were disloyal to the German nation because of their subversive and cosmopolitan traits, themselves caused by their distinct cultural and social (though not biological) characters. Stating that there would always be Jews who are nothing but "German-speaking Orientals," Treitschke was doubtful whether Jewish acculturation into German society was genuinely possible.<sup>70</sup> In 1882, the first international antisemitic congress convened in Dresden, bringing together activists from different European countries to propagate racially based antisemitic agenda.

Amid these developments, the idea that German was a vehicle of antisemitism started to circulate in Jewish nationalist circles. As noted in

Chapter 2, Sh. Y. Abramovitsh wrote in a preface to his Yiddish rendering of Pinsker's *Autoemancipation!* that the pamphlet had been written in German, "the language of the people whose renowned intellectuals' wisdom and humaneness is as great as the madness and evilness of its truculent fools."<sup>71</sup> Abramovitsh pointed to the twofold load of the German language, which shifted between enlightenment and antisemitic hatred. An essay published in *Ha-Melits* in 1890 blamed German Jews for seeking "to make German the language of belief for all Jews," and warned, "Rest assured that the German language will cease to exist before the Hebrew language is forgotten by the seed of Israel." The author criticized Jews who had elevated the German language, "in which antisemites desecrate our belief, people and bible, the root of our religion."<sup>72</sup> In an essay appearing in 1898 in the Krakow-based Hebrew periodical *Ha-Eshkol*, Yehuda Leib Landa criticized Jews who had written "in German on the German soil" and fought for the German people even though there was almost no country "that showed deeper contempt for the people of Israel."<sup>73</sup>

The correlation between German and antisemitism would reverberate with greater vehemence in the Nazi period, but as these examples demonstrate, it started to take shape in Eastern European Jewish nationalists' response to German antisemitism. The ramifications of the image of the German language that began to be propagated in the 1880s provide a concrete example of how the tension between imperial and nationalist ideological frameworks played out. Nationalist, *völkisch*, and antisemitic currents in Germany and Austria challenged German's extraterritorial and transnational quality as it had been prevalent in previous decades.

The mostly discursive appearances of German antisemitism were amplified by the surge of antisemitic violence and policies in Eastern Europe. This was a critical factor eliciting mass Jewish immigration to western Europe and the United States. The question of territorial solution stood at the center of Jewish national debates, with Palestine acquiring a major role as an aspired destination.<sup>74</sup> Nathan Birnbaum's coining of the term *Zionismus* in 1890 captured this shift, implying a claim for ideological coherence, engagement in political agitation, and unequivocal emphasis on Jews' historical land.<sup>75</sup> Theodor Herzl, whose confrontation with antisemitism in western Europe informed his view of the "Jewish question," entered Jewish politics in the

mid-1890s and formed circles of activists across Europe. Political Zionism, as Herzl's approach would be termed, advocated the preeminence of diplomatic efforts over approaches that centered on sporadic immigration and educational and cultural activities. In Herzl's view, antisemitism was an acute peril that should generate immediate political action. Like his main partner, Max Nordau, Herzl came from an assimilated background and had only minimal acquaintance with Jewish history and culture. The question of the extent to which Hebrew culture and education ought to shape Zionism's agenda—the *Kulturfrage*—became a key theme in the movement's first decade.<sup>76</sup>

The German language played in this debate a persistent, yet mostly subterranean role. Even after embarking on his political career as a Zionist, Herzl remained deeply immersed in German culture and language. In his 1896 pamphlet *Der Judenstaat*, he envisioned the future land of the Jews as a multilingual federation in which Jews would maintain their previous languages. Similar to the German Jewish Enlightenment's linguistic ideology, Herzl envisioned a Jewish future in which languages such as Yiddish and other Jewish vernaculars—"miserable stunted jargons"—would no longer be heard.<sup>77</sup> In an 1895 diary entry, he noted that German would likely be an official language in the Jews' future land.<sup>78</sup> As Dmitry Shumsky noted, for Herzl there was no necessary contradiction between Jewish acculturation into European society and Zionist aspirations. The establishment of Jewish self-government in Palestine was not a reaction to Jews' acquisition of enlightenment ideas but rather a result of it.<sup>79</sup> In the following years, Herzl and his political disciples downplayed his early German-centrism, clarifying his treatment of the language problem in a special preface to the Hebrew translation of *Der Judenstaat* and emphasizing Herzl's growing belief in the bond between the Jewish people and its historical language.<sup>80</sup>

In practice, German served as Zionism's chief language. The movement's headquarters were located in Germany and Austria, and its main periodicals were printed in German, as were the majority of its scholarly and political publications.<sup>81</sup> Marcus Ehrenpreis, a Hebrew writer, published in 1897 a programmatic essay advocating a revolution in Hebrew literature that would transcend the burdening legacy of ancient and medieval Hebrew and generate new sources of vitality. He published the article in the Hebrew periodical *Ha-Shiloah*—but also in the German Zionist periodical *Die Welt*.<sup>82</sup> In 1898,

when the Russian Zionist Nahman Syrkin sought to promote a socialist agenda for the Zionist movement, he published an article “that was written in German and was addressed to the Zionist audience of the time,” as he later recalled.<sup>83</sup> The Romanian Jewish monthly *Lumea Israelită* (“The Jewish World”) included in its October 1902 debut volume an article in German, written by the Romanian rabbi and scholar Iacob Isaac Niemirower, calling for the establishment of an international “Jabneh Academy” for the study of Jewish culture, religion, and history. The magazine’s editor remarked in a footnote in Romanian that certain articles would be published in French or German to communicate some of Romanian Jewry’s concerns with readers abroad, adding that “only articles that are of interest for the entirety of Judaism will be published in these international languages. Internal themes will be debated among ourselves.”<sup>84</sup> The editor thus acknowledged the functionality of German as a preferred language for addressing all-Jewish matters (no articles would appear in French), even in a periodical that was otherwise written entirely in Romanian.

German’s dominant role in Zionism fulfilled an important communicative function and was clearly related to its leadership’s cultural orientation and to Germany’s central role in European politics. Still, this predicament was entangled with political tensions. Not only was German foreign to the majority of European Jews residing in Eastern Europe; it was also a marker of Western liberal proclivities. What is more, the Hebrew language served as one of the chief sources of legitimacy for the Jewish national cause. In this respect, German’s centrality was indicative of Western Jews’ alleged detachment from Judaism’s religious and linguistic roots. German was a *lingua franca* of the Zionist movement but also an emblematic not-Hebrew, a reminder of the missing linguistic unity of the Jewish nation. As Zionist rhetoric based itself largely on the anomaly of Jewish national existence on European soil, the utilization of German rendered this anomaly visible.<sup>85</sup>

When the Zionist movement convened its first congress in 1897 in the Basel Stadtcasino, the portraits of both Leon Pinsker and Perets Smolenskin were hanging on the wall alongside other ideological forerunners of Jewish nationalism (fig. 6).<sup>86</sup> This came to convey the idea that proto-Zionist sentiments prevailed across the Jewish world in the decades preceding the movement’s establishment. The congress’s setting, however, drew predominantly on



FIGURE 6. First Zionist Congress, 1897. Photograph by Heinrich Loewe. Central Zionist Archives, NHL\336323. Courtesy of the Central Zionist Archives.

German cultural and ceremonial customs. The congresses were replete with German symbols and music—Wagner’s overture to *Tannhäuser* was played at the opening of the 1898 Congress—and the German language was the chief language of communication.<sup>87</sup> The Hebrew version of the invitation to the first congress, addressing Eastern European Zionists, noted that the speakers were free to use Hebrew.<sup>88</sup> In reality, as one of the participants admitted, “Hebrew was scarcely heard.”<sup>89</sup> In the following congresses, speeches and discussions were held in different languages, although German maintained its dominant role. Its centrality also imbued the congress with an added layer of respectability and of belonging to the realm of international diplomacy.<sup>90</sup>

From the very outset, the role of German as the chief language of communication was challenged on practical grounds. A delegate decried in 1899 the fact that one can hear in the congress all possible languages, “but one hasn’t heard yet a word in the only specifically Jewish language, the Hebrew language!”<sup>91</sup> This signaled a symbolic discrepancy in early Zionism. Hebrew was evidently not spoken by the majority of the participants and, apart from limited circles, was hardly used as an oral language of communication. It was indeed Yiddish that had the largest number of speakers within the movement. The speech that received the “loudest applause,” according

to British Zionist Israel Cohen, was delivered in Yiddish by Ephraim Ish-Kishor, a middle-ranking activist and a Hebrew teacher and writer.<sup>92</sup> To be sure, many Zionist activists had already learned German in their youth, and its proximity to Yiddish made it more accessible than other foreign languages. Yet in the congress hall there was a *de facto* coexistence of German, Yiddish, Russian, and other languages, building up, as one participant called it, a “babel tower of languages,” in which “many of our brethren cannot understand each other.”<sup>93</sup>

Israel Cohen, who attended the first congress as a reporter, recalled that “it was doubtful whether many were able to understand the elegant German in which Herzl spoke.”<sup>94</sup> A French delegate apologized in advance for his “mixed, unliterary German.”<sup>95</sup> Another delegate, an American of British descent, apologized before beginning his talk in German at the 1899 congress, adding: “You would perhaps understand my bad German more easily than my good English.”<sup>96</sup> Richard Gottheil, an American delegate (with a PhD from the University of Leipzig) who began his speech at the 1900 congress in English, was interrupted by the audience, asking him to switch to German.<sup>97</sup> It was at time impossible to separate practical from ideological arguments for or against using German. At the congress of 1899, Menahem Ussishkin declined Herzl’s request to speak in German, replying: “I speak mainly to those who understand me and who wish to understand me. . . . I want to speak only in a manner which will allow my position to be properly understood, and this I can do only in Russian.”<sup>98</sup>

The language choice also affected how the debates would appear in the protocols, which until 1935 were published exclusively in German. The transcribers were German speakers and unable to record other languages. Speeches were translated simultaneously into other languages by other attendees—not by professional interpreters. Those who spoke in Russian, Yiddish, French, or English—in particular at the congresses before the First World War—appeared in the protocols only in the (usually paraphrased and abbreviated) version of those who translated them. In 1898, Bernard Lazare appealed to the participants to guarantee that the congress’s protocols and publications reach Jews who speak neither German nor Yiddish, particularly those in France and North Africa. Lazare himself spoke in French, and his participation in the discussion appeared only through Nordau’s translation



and summary.<sup>99</sup> Another delegate apologized for his poor German and admitted he would rather speak in Russian, “but certain misunderstandings emerge in the translations.”<sup>100</sup>

Different from the speeches, the discussions were only occasionally translated simultaneously, and the transcription reflected the inferior status of languages that are not German. The protocols from the congress’s first decade recorded various cases in which comments by non-German speakers did not appear in the protocol. In such cases, the protocols state, for instance, “Delegate Seph: (speaks in Jargon)” or “Delegate Ettigen: (speaks Russian).”<sup>101</sup> The 1898 protocol refers at one point to a French delegate who “speaks in a manner that is unintelligible to the stenographers.”<sup>102</sup> It was thus also in the printed version of the congress’s discussions that the linguistic order could marginalize participants who did not speak German.<sup>103</sup>

The discomfort resulting from the need to translate the speeches held in various languages likewise touched on cultural divisions within the Jewish world. Aaron Marcus, a Hasidic, Zionist rabbi from Krakow and descendant of a German Jewish family, wrote in 1900 in his (German-language) newspaper about the “babel-like confusion” of the congresses. The root of the confusion, according to Marcus, lay in the “modern, assimilatory education” and the damage that it had inflicted on the “rightly famous Jewish linguistic genius.” He wondered bitterly how come a “Levantine Talmudic Jew” could speak five or six languages, whereas a Russian Jewish student “does not understand a word of any other world language.”<sup>104</sup> Marcus’s reproach of Jewish assimilatory currents was directed against Russian Jews, although the currents had been prevalent within the German-speaking realm as well. Yet because of German’s role as a global language and its role in the Jewish world, it was not, in Marcus’s eyes, part of the Zionist language problem.

German’s dominance also played a role in ideological quarrels between the proponents of a diplomatic approach and a grassroots approach to Jewish political matters. In the Jewish political discourse of the period, the term “Congress-Zionism” denoted Western European Zionists’ clinging to diplomatic channels and philanthropy. Among Eastern European Zionists, this term was often used to highlight the ceremonialism of the Zionist Congress and its remoteness from the experience of the Jewish masses.<sup>105</sup> In these circles, attachment to German had problematic ideological implications.



Vladimir Jabotinsky, the leader of Revisionist Zionism in the interwar period, wrote that as a child his proficiency in German was equal to his proficiency in Russian, yet German “did not take root in my soul.” Of all languages, it was German which he “liked the least.” With calculated humility, Jabotinsky admitted that he could not remember “whether it is ‘das Moment’ or ‘der Moment’ and whether it is ‘das Einkommensteuer’ or ‘die Einkommensteuer.’”<sup>106</sup> At the 1903 congress, Jabotinsky gave a provocative speech in “highly eloquent Russian,” as he put it, that exceeded the limit of fifteen minutes. In his autobiography, he quoted the words with which Herzl and his assistants requested him to get off the podium. “Herzl told me: *Ihre Zeit ist um* [“Your time is up”]. One of his assistants, Herr Friedman, told me in his native Prussian way: *gehen Sie herunter, sonst werden Sie heruntergeschleppt* [Come down or you will be dragged down].”<sup>107</sup> According to the historian Michael Stanislawski, Herzl was not present in the hall, and “Herr Friedman” was actually another person, Max Bodenheimer. The veracity of the incident is therefore questionable.<sup>108</sup> Be that as it may, Jabotinsky’s decision to speak in Russian seems to have been intended to disrupt the Germanophone atmosphere of the congress—or at least this is how he hoped this incident would go down in history. In this manner, Jabotinsky sharpened the divide between the ideological world of the “Prussian” Zionists and their Russian counterparts.

At the turn of the century, the major ideological critic of Herzl’s political approach in Jewish nationalism was Ahad Ha-Am (Asher Zvi Ginsberg). Growing up in a traditional Jewish environment in Russia but turning to secular and European knowledge in his youth, Ahad Ha-Am’s approach was ultimately modern, attaching to Jewish sources—first and foremost the Bible—key importance as assets of national culture and not merely as objects of religious observance. His vision of modern Hebrew was part of what he saw as Judaism’s historical chain. In this regard, Ahad Ha-Am was deeply influenced by Smolenskin.<sup>109</sup> Echoing Herder’s philosophy of language, he bound together spiritual and linguistic progress, deeming the imperative to revive Hebrew not merely a technical step but the core of Judaism’s spiritual and political transformation.<sup>110</sup>

A Jewish community in Palestine was pivotal to Ahad Ha-Am’s understanding of Zionism. His emphasis, however, was on matters of Jewish ethics,

education, and Hebrew culture. In his view, it was not a shortsighted—and in any case unrealizable—“exodus” that would secure the future of the Jewish nation but a cultural regeneration of Judaism as a whole. The main target of his criticism was therefore Herzlian Zionists’ indifference and ignorance of these matters. In 1896, Ahad Ha-Am established a Hebrew monthly, *Ha-Shiloah*, which quickly became the major platform for political and cultural debates in the Hebrew language, exercising the highest editing standards to that date in the Hebrew sphere. Ahad Ha-Am’s editing policy and his trail-blazing style in the modern Hebrew essay form made *Ha-Shiloah* a major factor in the consolidation of modern Hebrew as a literary and scholarly language.

In December 1902, Ahad Ha-Am published in *Ha-Shiloah* a scathing review of Herzl’s utopian novel, *Altneuland*. The novel depicted the realization of Jewish self-government in Palestine, a state that practiced European values of progress, enlightenment, and tolerance while providing Jews with a haven. In his review, Ahad Ha-Am criticized Herzl for imposing a Western idea, bereft of any mark of Jewish culture and ethics. He highlighted Herzl’s failure to address the place of the Hebrew language and asserted that from various passages it appeared “that the masses in the villages and in the cities speak in German or jargon.” The educated ones spoke German, whereas “the peasants, of course, speak Jargon.”<sup>111</sup> This, for Ahad Ha-Am, was but an example of Herzl’s inability to acknowledge the superior role of Hebrew in Judaism. Hebrew, in Ahad Ha-Am’s view, must be protected and nourished in Jewish national life in Palestine.

Max Nordau read a German translation of the review before its publication in April 1903. Probably in coordination with Herzl, he published in March of the same year a reply in the German Zionist weekly *Die Welt*.<sup>112</sup> His response was an aggressive critique of Ahad Ha-Am’s approach and of what Nordau perceived as its ethnocentrism and political futility. While presenting Ahad Ha-Am as an intolerant, narrow-minded, negative thinker, Nordau also dwelled on the language question and on the passages from Herzl’s novel addressed by Ahad Ha-Am. He misquoted Ahad Ha-Am, ascribing to him a statement that the entire Jewish population in Herzl’s Palestine “would speak German, not Hebrew.” Nordau dismissed Ahad Ha-Am’s alleged complaint by saying that German’s dominance in Herzl’s book

resulted from its being written in German—"just as the Romans in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar do not speak Latin, but English," and just as Jews who appear in the poetry of Milton, Racine, Otto Ludwig, and Hebbel do not speak a Jewish language but rather the authors' languages. Nordau added sarcastically that in case Ahad Ha-Am was "unfamiliar with these works," he should turn to the Bible, where he would find Egyptian figures speaking Hebrew. Nordau concluded: "Herzl thus employed the very same method used in the first book of Moses. Do you understand that, Ahad Ha-Am?"<sup>113</sup>

Nordau sought to demonstrate that the presence of German in the novel was ultimately technical and had no relationship to Herzl's actual position on the language question. In this regard, Nordau circumvented Ahad Ha-Am's implied critique, namely that Herzl's Zionism had little to do with Judaism and was rather rooted in Western thought and German culture. More importantly, Nordau mobilized this issue to portray Ahad Ha-Am as a provincial reader who could not distinguish between form and content and who displayed a lack of acquaintance with the conventions of world literature.

Nordau addressed the language question from another angle. He admitted that Ahad Ha-Am was writing in "good, fluent Hebrew," but he added that his "so called essays" were nothing but a "jumble of overheard, opaque catchphrases of European feuilletonists, a chaos of nebulous expressions in which one looked in vain for a single clear, precise, logically developed, reasonable thought." Nordau employed stereotypical notions of Eastern European thought as irrational and "nebulous," as opposed to the coherent, rational thought prevalent in Western Zionism. He labeled Ahad Ha-Am's writing as "mystical" and "gray," such that "a realistic Jew who seeks to implement his historical ideal in reality would be lost."<sup>114</sup> Nordau added that parts of Jewish society have sought "to rescue him [Ahad Ha-Am] from the corner in which he rambled unnoticed." His essays were translated into German and "appeared in our Zionist periodicals." Zionism "has given him an audience to which he could teach and disseminate the Hebrew language." Ahad Ha-Am was granted the opportunity "to sunbathe under the light of the great Zionist public sphere and to wander through European literature," but he had used this opportunity to turn against "the naïve community and its leaders."<sup>115</sup>

In Nordau's depiction of Ahad Ha-Am's ungrateful and manipulative conduct, German was a vehicle through which his Zionist audience saved Ahad Ha-Am from his marginality. According to this portrayal, Ahad Ha-Am's Hebrew career had left little echo before it was presented to the German public ("our Zionist periodicals"). Nordau fed here on a German and German Jewish trope—which Herzl used as well—of degrading linguistic practices in the Eastern European Jewish "ghetto."<sup>116</sup> In Nordau's essay, it was Hebrew that was presented as lacking a proper readership. Nordau also employed a range of descriptions which he had previously used in an essay published in 1902, referring to the "uneducated" (*ungebildete*) masses in Eastern Europe, whose Zionism relied on religious sentiment, "without any thought," and had evolved "out of emotion, instinct." Parts of those "Zionist masses," he added, were "not entirely free from mystical tendencies."<sup>117</sup> Even though Ahad Ha-Am was well versed in European thought, and despite offering a secular impetus to Judaism, he appeared in Nordau's essay as bearing the same faults as the rest of the "masses."

In his reply to Nordau, published in the Hebrew periodical *Ha-Zman*, Ahad Ha-Am noted that Nordau's essay revealed the true nature of his views of the Hebrew public, namely as standing in a "dark corner," which had remained useless "until the sun of the West shined upon it." He blamed Nordau for falsifying his words when discussing the question of the languages that are to be spoken in Zion, wondering sarcastically whether the falsification of quotes had also been "common in civilized literature" and whether it could also be substantiated through references to Milton and Shakespeare.<sup>118</sup> Ahad Ha-Am did not engage with Nordau's argument as to the marginal role of Hebrew compared with German, yet he did delve into this accusation insofar as it exposed Nordau's condescending view of Eastern European Jews and of Hebrew writers. In doing so, Ahad Ha-Am criticized the idea that Hebrew culture depended on the sponsorship of the German-speaking Jewish political elite.

It is important to note that affinity to Hebrew was certainly not alien to the ideology of Western European Zionists. In a letter Nordau sent to a friend in 1899, he added a short greeting in Hebrew.<sup>119</sup> In a translated essay published in 1898 in the Hebrew periodical *Ha-Tsvi*, Nordau wrote: "I have

always loved and nourished passionately my German language, but I feel pain and humiliation to require a translator in order to reach the readers of *Ha-Tsvi*.” He added that for Jews like himself, “antisemitism arrived too late,” as he had already forgotten the scarce Hebrew knowledge transmitted to him by his family. And so, “to my shame, it is easier for me to express myself in Latin than in the language of my forefathers.”<sup>120</sup> In this text, Nordau elevated Hebrew as a cherished, ancestral language. Not knowing it became a source of shame for the Western European Zionist, disillusioned by modern antisemitism yet unable to retrieve the cultural assets his forefathers had preserved. In other essays, Nordau depicted Hebrew literature in similarly sentimental and positive terms.<sup>121</sup> Yet in the context of the quarrel with Ahad Ha-Am, Hebrew assumed the role of a peripheral language, serving a non-European nationalist such as Ahad Ha-Am merely as a vessel of illogical, emotional “ramblings.”

Nordau’s derogatory views on Ahad Ha-Am’s position as a Hebrew writer were thus at odds with his Romanticist view of Hebrew. That said, Ahad Ha-Am’s rejection of Nordau and Herzl’s German-centrism also stood in tension with his own engagement with the German language. Granted, Ahad Ha-Am adhered to Hebrew writing and advocated its dissemination. In one of his letters he stated: “I am a Hebrew and my language is Hebrew. If there is anything of interest in my writings, it can be translated by others.”<sup>122</sup> Nonetheless, he often had his essays published in German. In a debate with Mikhah Yosef Berdyczewski about Nietzsche and Judaism, Ahad Ha-Am asked for his essay to be published in the German Zionist press “for various reasons.”<sup>123</sup> In a correspondence with Hebrew writer Hillel Zeitlin, he asserted that it is impossible to write about Jewish ethics “without knowledge of the German language.”<sup>124</sup> In an autobiographical essay, he described how learning Russian and German enabled him to acquire knowledge and intellect. He recalled his particular fondness for Herder’s works.<sup>125</sup> Both Nordau and Ahad Ha-Am sought to fashion themselves as representing core positions within Jewish nationalism. The perceived polarity between German and Hebrew played in this setting an important role. At the same time, they both embodied the extent to which the ideological and practical significance of the two languages were intermingled.

Ahad Ha-Am's rejection of German's presence in Western Zionist visions was qualified by his own recognition of its value as a language of knowledge. In this respect, he echoed the ambivalence surrounding the German language in Hebraist thought since Smolenskin. Both the effort to provide Hebrew readers with access to wider knowledge and the desire to present Jewish national scholarship on respectable platforms derived direct benefit from German's functions. This came in tandem with recurrent criticism of its social and ideological impact on the Western Zionist worldview. Within Jewish nationalism, Eastern European Jews' affinity to Hebrew gave them a critical ideological advantage over their Western counterparts. Nonetheless, their positioning of German alongside—and against—Hebrew revealed the bilateral and ambivalent nature of the ideological binary between *Ost-* and *Westjudentum*. Eastern European Hebraists presented Hebrew as inherent to Jewish nationalism and represented Hebrew readers as resilient to the allure of German language and culture. Yet as a vehicle of knowledge and nationhood, the German language still had a cardinal role to play. Even in early twentieth-century Palestine, where the struggle for Hebraism was embedded in the lived experience of Jews residing there, German continued to influence the ways in which language questions were understood and confronted. The next chapter takes us from Europe to the Middle East.

## PALESTINE AND THE MONOLINGUAL IMPERATIVE

The previous chapter showed that late nineteenth-century Hebraists sought to reconfigure Hebrew's political and cultural status but not to undermine the Jewish multilingual order. In this respect, Hebraists sustained the language ideology of the *Haskalah*.<sup>1</sup> However, this state of affairs changed in the early twentieth century. Responding to several political developments in the Russian and Ottoman Empires, Hebraists took the very premises of multilingualism to task, arguing for Hebrew's primacy as a spoken, literary, and scholarly tongue. The relation and hierarchy between the written and the spoken realms were subject to debate, but the monolingual framework became dominant in Hebraist politics.

While Yiddishism was Hebraists' main political rival, it was German that encapsulated the virtues and dangers of Jewish multilingualism. To substantiate this argument, I examine in this chapter how the advancement of Hebrew in Palestine was informed by the place of German in Jewish culture. Carrying out a monolingual agenda involved an inevitable confrontation with German's multiple legacies in the Jewish world. German represented not only the Jewish multilingual condition as such but also a range of theological sensitivities emanating from its functions in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Jewish societies. In this respect, the role of German in Hebraist agitation during these years should also be read as a case study of

how secular and religious impulses bore upon each other in Jewish nationalism. Before going further, however, it will be useful to overview the political developments that brought the language question to the fore in the decade leading to the First World War.

Herzl's death in 1904 weakened the main approach he had been advocating, namely working via diplomatic channels with the Ottoman and European Empires toward the acquisition of a territorial autonomy, preferably—but not necessarily—in Palestine. The “Uganda Plan” to assign Jews territory in the British colony of East Africa, initially supported by Herzl, was rejected at the 1905 congress, after two-year-long, heated debates.<sup>2</sup> Territorialist visions continued to be part of Jewish national debates, yet it was Palestine that from that point on stood at the center of Zionist diplomatic efforts. At the same time, political Zionists after Herzl initiated projects for extensive cultural and agricultural training, and participated in struggles for Jewish national rights across the diaspora. The Zionist Congress of 1907 ratified this ideological line. Zionists' spotlight on the Yishuv kindled practical questions around Hebrew's role in the Jewish national endeavor.

Instigating the growing urgency of the territorial question was the eruption of anti-Jewish violence in Russia since 1903, and in particular during the Revolution of 1905. Hundreds of pogroms were committed, unleashing a massive wave of Jewish emigration from Russia, mainly to the United States.<sup>3</sup> The upheaval also elicited immigration to Ottoman Palestine (“the second Aliyah”). While numerically limited—approximately thirty-five thousand immigrants between 1904 and 1914—this wave of immigration also included ideologically motivated, young men and women who were driven by revolutionary, socialist, and nationalist worldviews nourished in tsarist Russia.<sup>4</sup> Some of the Yishuv's ideological leaders in the decades to come—such as David Ben-Gurion and Berl Katsnelson—arrived in this wave of immigration. Several groups of activists set it as their goal to combat the prevalence of Yiddish and other languages in the Yishuv, and to promote Hebrew language and culture. They established for that purpose social circles and educational institutions in which spoken Hebrew was taught and practiced.<sup>5</sup> When the Poale Zion party established a Yiddish periodical (*Der onfang*) in 1907, a debate broke out, leading eventually to the decision that Hebrew was the party



periodical's sole language.<sup>6</sup> In practice, Yiddish continued to be widely used in the Yishuv, and many Zionist activists continued to defend its legitimacy for either national or practical reasons, or both.<sup>7</sup>

The Revolution of 1905 affected Hebraism in additional ways. In its effort to curb the revolutionary upheaval, Russia introduced a series of reforms, including the establishment of a parliamentary system that enabled the formation of Jewish parties. Russia also loosened its censorship policy and allowed greater freedom of speech.<sup>8</sup> The enhanced entry of Jews into party politics led to a significant rise in national agitation—chiefly in Yiddish—and to a widening of the Jewish public sphere. The Yiddish press became one of the main arenas of Jewish political agitation, alongside Yiddish theaters and musical companies.<sup>9</sup> Various Hebraist accounts conveyed despair amid Hebrew's marginalization. As Dan Miron has argued, the years of the revolution exposed Hebraists' limited ability to maintain a viable social and literary sphere.<sup>10</sup> The Bund party, which had been established in Vilna in 1897 to represent Jewish workers and which in 1905 placed Yiddish language and culture at the heart of its nationalist ideology, turned into an important force in Eastern European Jewish politics following the revolution.

In 1908, prominent Yiddish nationalists, backed by a significant cadre of writers, met in Czernowitz for the first international conference on Yiddish. The conference challenged Hebrew-centered Zionist ideology and advocated a modern, secular, Yiddish-speaking, Jewish nation (the conference will be discussed in Chapter 6). Hebraists enhanced their activity, defending Hebrew's historical supremacy and promoting educational initiatives in Europe, the United States, and Palestine.<sup>11</sup> In the same year, the revolution of the Young Turks led to a series of reforms in the Ottoman Empire, including the reinstitution of a parliamentary system and the relaxation of censorship of Arabic press. The political agitation around the elections and the sectarian tendencies disseminated by the press further emphasized cultural difference.<sup>12</sup> Over the following years, Hebraist activists engaged in different debates over the prominence of Hebrew in the Yishuv, culminating in the 1913 "Language War" over the intention to set German as the main language of instruction in the Technicum, a university that was being built in Haifa.<sup>13</sup>

The events of these years accorded the language question cardinal significance in Jewish nationalism. For Hebraists, this period involved a sense

of crisis—in particular during the 1905 Revolution and its immediate aftermath—but also stirred cultural and political activism. Questions of Hebrew's political status converged with practical issues regarding the formation of a modern Hebrew culture. In what follows, I explore three dimensions of the German question in Hebrew monolingualism. Each mirrors the merging of ideological with practical concerns. The first section examines the challenge of reconciling the legacies of German nationhood with Hebrew-centered Jewish nationalism. It focuses on Simon Bernfeld, one of the most popular Hebrew and German writers in the first decades of the century. The second section tackles the legacy of German and German Jewish scholarships and their meaning for Hebrew educators and scholars, a theme which Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and Haim Nahman Bialik addressed in their work. The third section turns to the matter of translation and analyzes Ahad Ha-Am's rendering of *Autoemancipation!* into Hebrew.

### Simon Bernfeld's Hebrew and the Legacies of German Nationhood

In the previous chapter we encountered Simon Bernfeld (1860–1940), a Galician Hebrew scholar and a rabbi in Belgrade, who discussed in *Ha-Asif* the unintended contribution of German Jewish scholarship to Jewish nationhood (fig. 7). One of the most prolific Hebrew writers of his time, Bernfeld's contemporaries viewed him as serving a vital role in the Hebrew cultural sphere. According to one account, Bernfeld had always been “on guard, standing and explaining. . . . Drawing [scholarship] from the West, both theirs and ours, and transmitting it to the Eastern Hebrew reader in his tongue and knowledge.”<sup>14</sup> The writer Mikhah Yosef Berdyczewski, while critical of Bernfeld's loose intellectual rigor, wrote in 1909 that Bernfeld “masters the language, and not the other way around,” synthesizing singularly written and spoken Hebrew. He added that if Hebrew were one day to become a spoken tongue, “it would be Bernfeld's Hebrew.”<sup>15</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am wrote in 1899 to Bernfeld—who published regularly in *Ha-Shiloah*—on how content he was that Bernfeld returned to the Hebrew literary sphere after his period in Belgrade. He added, “We both know, and others do as well, that of the recently published books that are worthy of attention, your yield is greater than all of your colleagues, and imagining



FIGURE 7. A postcard with Simon Bernfeld's Portrait.  
National Library of Israel, Avraham Schwadron Collection,  
Schwad 02 02 226. Courtesy of the National Library of Israel.

the literature of these years without you would make it appear weak and accursed.”<sup>16</sup> The New York-based *Jewish Encyclopedia* stated in 1903 that Bernfeld “belongs to the younger class of clear and forceful writers who have brought new life into modern Hebrew literature and have lifted the journalistic part of it to an eminence which it had not before attained.”<sup>17</sup> According to Joseph Klausner, Bernfeld’s writings had “educated a generation of Hebrew readers.” He added that before the First World War, Bernfeld was the chief supplier of intellectual goods for the Hebrew readership.<sup>18</sup>

Despite Bernfeld’s central role in the Hebrew cultural sphere, his name has largely been forgotten. Indeed, his prolific oeuvre was not associated with a novel standpoint, and his peers in the Hebrew scholarly sphere did not value highly his intellectual vigor. However, his works enjoyed wide popularity for their elegant style and erudition. Bernfeld’s role as a mediator of knowledge between Western and Eastern Jewries is in itself a reason to examine how he engaged with the German language in his writings. Another reason concerns the fact that Bernfeld published regularly in German. While bilingual careers were not a rare practice in Jewish literary and political circles, this fact sheds further light on Bernfeld’s political convictions.

Simon Bernfeld was born in 1860 in the Galician town Stanisławów and grew up as a maskil in Lemberg, which had been the center of the Austrian administration of eastern Galicia, and whose Jewish community was drawn to German culture despite a gradual process of Polonization in the second half of the century.<sup>19</sup> He started publishing in the Hebrew press in the late 1870s, and in 1882 joined the editorial of the widely read *Ha-Magid*. He studied Semitic languages, history, and philosophy in Königsberg and Berlin, where he also attended the rabbinical seminary *Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*.<sup>20</sup> Bernfeld moved in 1886 to Belgrade, where he served as the rabbi of the Sephardic community.<sup>21</sup> He returned to Berlin in 1894 and remained there permanently with his family, tutoring German language for Jewish students and working as a freelance writer and publicist from his apartment in Charlottenburg.

Bernfeld published Hebrew monographs and essays on various topics ranging from ancient Judaism to the history of Islam, medieval Jewish poetry, and modern Jewish thought. He published an acclaimed three-volume anthology of Jewish literary responses to anti-Jewish persecution throughout

history (*Sefer Ha-Dema'ot*, or “The Book of Tears”) and a five-volume series on Jewish thought. Bernfeld’s commitment to Hebrew was unequivocal, asserting in an article, “What I write in Hebrew would enter the treasure of our national, eternal assets, and what I have written in foreign languages is only the present need, and if not translated into Hebrew *in the present*, it shall be forgotten.”<sup>22</sup> In a private letter from 1895, Bernfeld explained his writing in German as deriving from strictly economic constraints. Asked about why he was publishing in German, Bernfeld explained that he loves deeply “our literature and tongue.” However, he continued, “I am not my own master, . . . I live within my own people that is drawn to every impurity, spending on theater, circuses, and mistresses and so on, but wouldn’t spend a dime for broadening the literature of the surviving remnant of Israel [*she’erit ha-pletah*].” He then recounted his interaction with a wealthy man from Berlin who agreed to pay for his publication for the Jewish people “on the condition that the book would be written in German.”<sup>23</sup>

In 1909, Bernfeld published in a Hebrew periodical an article titled “Hebrew Literature in its Demise.”<sup>24</sup> Commenting on Hebrew literature’s lack of demand and the shutting down of Hebrew publishing houses, Bernfeld found no room for optimism: “The bubble has burst.” However, he reflected on this process with acceptance, shaped by his self-proclaimed Hegelianism: “Everything is necessary and right for its time.” The Hebrew language, “the *genuinely* last remnant of our historical national property, is falling into oblivion.” Bernfeld’s judgment of Hebrew did not mean that the Jewish nation was dying. Not knowing the Hebrew alphabet, he added, did not affect some Zionists who had reduced their Jewishness to “national excitement.” These Western activists have rejected the idea that “in order to be Zionist, one has first to be Jewish, and in order to be Jewish, one has to *know* Judaism and *live in it*.”

Bernfeld gave vent to the pessimistic tone prevalent among Hebrew writers of the time. This, however, did not mitigate his commitment to the language. For Bernfeld, Jewish national self-understanding consisted in “learning, understanding, and knowing the Hebrew language.” A people could not evolve “without a national language which saves its spiritual assets, *and with which it feels the taste of the nation*.” He held that the relationship of Jews to

foreign tongues has been inherently transient, invoking German as an example of a language that in the early nineteenth century had been “common to almost the entire Israelite nation” and had served as the chief language of Judaism’s scientific literature. But in the age of nationalism—after “the earth divided,” as he put it, borrowing from Genesis (10:25)—Jews have acquired the national languages of their lands and have gradually neglected German. In this respect, German and Yiddish posed the same problem. As a language that lacked a rich, Jewish national literature, Yiddish, too, was bound to wither away. Bernfeld concluded his essay by correlating Political Zionists’ search for external sponsorship to their myopic indifference to Hebrew. He admitted that the long-term investment in Hebrew literature had yet to yield immediate success, but Zionists’ short-term reliance on the recently abdicated Sultan Abdul Hamid’s “good promises” did not prove particularly useful either.

Bernfeld did not seem to consider seriously Hebraists’ political and educational activity in Palestine and Europe, and for this reason his evaluation of Hebrew’s “demise” was one-sided. That said, his article did reflect pointedly Hebraism’s main goal in the early twentieth century: the striving for self-reliance and commitment to internal cultural work, deeming it superior to external political recognition. German appeared in this context as the once valuable yet by then obsolete language of Jewish knowledge, proof that Hebrew language and culture must be the primary vehicle for national regeneration.

However, Bernfeld’s case could also be recounted as an exemplary case of a Central European Jew immersed in German language and culture, studying in German universities and in a liberal-oriented rabbinical seminary in Berlin, and writing extensively for the German Jewish press. He wrote several popular scientific works in German, addressing topics such as the religious poetry of medieval Jewry, an introduction to the Talmud, and an introductory survey of the Hebrew Bible. Bernfeld’s historical assessment of the Berlin Haskalah was mixed but broadly approving. He believed that for all of Mendelssohn’s political and intellectual shortcomings, he translated the Pentateuch “for the name of God,” adding that the translation was “good and needed at its time.”<sup>25</sup> With regard to the question of assimilation, Bernfeld argued that one should not “put the blame on the leaders of the generation



only for causing harm, because the spirit of the times had affected the matters,” referring to processes of secularization and conversion fueled by the political atmosphere in the wake of the French Revolution.<sup>26</sup>

In a bibliographical essay published in a German Jewish annual in 1911, Bernfeld asserted in Hegelian terms that the work of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in previous decades had been entwined with the fate of Judaism itself: “Despite the unfavorable conditions under which it evolved, it has arisen in its universality to the status of a cultural-historical factor.”<sup>27</sup> In a Hebrew monograph, Bernfeld wrote with some qualifications on Abraham Geiger that “even if we oppose his views, we should admit that he has contributed greatly to the development of Judaism and to spreading the knowledge of the Torah among the Jews of Germany.”<sup>28</sup> In another article, Bernfeld went against the widespread view that early German Jewish scholars had neglected the Hebrew language, and he argued that they “knew well Hebrew language and literature, and have often used it.” More importantly, he noted that those writing in German did this “not due to lack of Hebrew knowledge, but for a different reason, namely their aspiration that Jewish knowledge be removed from the Jewish study house so as to introduce it into non-Jewish universities.”<sup>29</sup> Bernfeld left the question open whether that purpose was worthy, but he presented their linguistic choice as defensible in its historical context.

In the 1920s, Bernfeld coedited with German rabbi Leo Baeck and others an anthology of Jewish religious sources. Bernfeld was also a member of the scientific committee of the German-language *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, for which he also contributed various entries.<sup>30</sup> On the question of German biblical criticism, which had preoccupied Jewish scholars since the late nineteenth century, Bernfeld’s approach was not consistent, but he generally endorsed some of its more radical theses regarding the multiple authors of Genesis and its having gone through several editions. His position on these matters elicited much criticism in Jewish intellectual circles.<sup>31</sup> Most tellingly, Bernfeld published in 1902 a highly popular German translation of the Bible, which sold one hundred thousand copies in seven editions, the last of which published in 1937.<sup>32</sup> Religious scholar W. Gunther Plaut wrote that Bernfeld’s translation was “Jewish without apology,” but also that in its stylistic and adherence to contemporary linguistic conventions it “represents a high point of German Jewry’s adaptation to German civilization.”<sup>33</sup>

If we were to take Bernfeld's words at face value, then his work of Jewish scholarship in German served a merely transitory function, "a present need," as he termed it. Yet an examination of Bernfeld's juxtaposition of the histories of Hebrew and German shows a more complex picture, one in which German appeared as a role model and as serving a historical function in Hebrew's formation as a national tongue. Indeed, his approach to German involved a nuanced appreciation of German's historical significance as the unifying language of the German nation, as a harbinger of modern ideas, and as a language invested with religious meanings.

In an article published in 1911 in *Ha-Tsfira* (edited by Nahum Sokolow), written against the backdrop of the British celebration of the three hundredth anniversary of the King James Bible, Bernfeld called to establish a national day celebrating the bond between the Jewish people and the Bible. Bernfeld based his argument not solely on the Bible's role in Jewish tradition but rather on its power as a mobilizing tool. He turned in this context to the German case, describing the early sixteenth century as being swept with popular desire to end oppression and to achieve "moral and national liberation." Martin Luther, according to Bernfeld, "with this intention in mind, and while fighting the Pope in Rome, set out to translate the Holy Scriptures into German," creating thus a tool to "reject the darkness."<sup>34</sup>

Like Smolenskin, Bernfeld employed a German nationalist narrative to inspire Jewish nationalism, but he also buttressed the parallel between the two movements by applying Jewish terms to the German case. He wrote that "Luther created thus a literary and cultural language for all tribes of Germany [*shivte germania*]." Bernfeld used the term "tribes"—commonly associated with the tribes of Israel (*shivte yisrael*)—for denoting German principalities.<sup>35</sup> For example, he wrote, "Decades before Bismarck strove to unite all tribes of Germany as a political union through diplomacy and power, Luther had created for them a common moral homeland." To underscore the analogy, Bernfeld stated: "This example is no mere detour. In its original Hebrew, the Bible was a common homeland for all diaspora Jews." He resorted to Luther also in order to explain how German Catholics had embraced the national legacy bequeathed by Luther: "He had given them the German Bible, hence its cultural national unity. The Israelite Torah had been the root of their national revival."<sup>36</sup> To render it a Jewish unifying tool, Hebraists



should learn from the German example. In Bernfeld's terms, the historical path that had led from linguistic revival to political power—from Luther to Bismarck—could serve as a role model for Jewish nationalists.<sup>37</sup>

The analogy between German and Jewish national histories also proved instrumental for Bernfeld in a debate around the Hebrew Language Committee's activity. The committee was originally cofounded in 1890 by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, and it was revitalized in 1904 to address the linguistic concerns of Hebrew teachers. It regularly published inventories of new words, designed to overcome the insufficiency of Hebrew in modern domains. The committee would turn after the establishment of the State of Israel into the Academy of the Hebrew Language.<sup>38</sup> In March 1912, Bernfeld published an essay entitled "The Founders of the Language," criticizing the committee's methods of reviving Hebrew as a vernacular. He argued that it was only by cultivating Hebrew literature and thought that the Hebrew language would expand and evolve. For this reason, Bernfeld held that "making Hebrew a spoken language in the common meaning—this, in my opinion, is an untenable goal. . . . A broken glass tool is unrecoverable."<sup>39</sup> Hebrew, in Bernfeld's view, needed to develop "from one generation to the other." Concepts, he added, "become richer or more complex and consequently a language becomes richer and more complex."

At this point, Bernfeld invoked the German language. In the previous hundred years, it had gained new concepts as existing terms had to embed and denote more variations and nuances to reach precision. This, in fact, was the evolutionary logic of every language. Bernfeld drew here on Lazarus Geiger's 1868 book *Ursprung und Entwicklung der menschlichen Sprache und Vernunft*, which, according to Bernfeld, offered a "profound understanding" of the matter. He further argued, "The founders of language would have tried to learn first from this perceptive book, had it not been for the poor superficiality that prevails among us." Geiger offered an evolutionary explanation to the development of language and to its shaping of human thought, a view that Bernfeld adopted wholeheartedly. In Bernfeld's view, given the dynamics of language's historical-organic development it would be futile and harmful to broaden it artificially. He brought as an example the committee's introduction of the word *oznei haman* (literally "Haman's ears," a pastry eaten

on Purim) and held that this version of the popular word “hamantaschen” (“Haman’s pockets”) sounded artificial and had little to do with the natural development of Hebrew, “which is a noble language.”

In a brief response to Bernfeld, the committee’s general secretary Haim Arie Zuta dwelled precisely on the word *oznei haman*, which, in fact, was not coined by the committee.<sup>40</sup> He provided examples of several appearances of this term in early modern sources and asserted that it was, indeed, the “property of the people.” As such, it need not be ridiculed: “Anyone who knows how words are coined in living languages—and in our land our language is alive—unlike Dr. Bernfeld’s broken glass tools—would find no reason to mock the word ‘Haman’s ears’ and other words used by the public and which have become the property of the people.” Zuta thus used the organic conceptual framework to dispute Bernfeld’s own version of it. He emphasized the public’s active participation in the evolution of language, as opposed to Bernfeld’s approach that favored written, intellectual products.

Another committee member, Aaron Meir Masie—who was born in Belarus, studied in Berlin and Zurich, and settled in Palestine in 1889—responded more elaborately, blaming Bernfeld for misunderstanding the committee’s guiding principles. He insisted that the committee was addressing the acute and urgent lack of vocabulary, and also deciding on new words after serious consideration of terms from various Hebrew sources. Masie derided Bernfeld for using the work of Lazarus Geiger “to give his article a scientific form,” and he argued against his assertion that human reason and knowledge could not be promoted through the work of academies. Broadening the scope of the debate, he brought as an example Kant and Mendelssohn’s groundbreaking essays written in response to the German Academy’s literary competitions.<sup>41</sup> Masie continued to dwell on the German case, asking rhetorically: “How come an author who resides in Germany and who prides himself on knowing ‘beautiful and useful linguistic pieces’ created through the German language, would fail to know that there exist in Germany many a ‘language committee’ operating as branches of the General German Language Association (Allgem. Deutscher-Sprachverein), which was established in Berlin in 1885 and whose goal is to cleanse the German language from foreign elements and to fill missing vocabulary gaps through German words?”<sup>42</sup>

Masie thus followed Bernfeld's resort to the German case so as to undermine his argument, adding a biting comment on the fact that Bernfeld was living in Germany.

In his response, Bernfeld reiterated his position regarding the central role of thinkers and writers in the development of language, underscoring the need to explore the alternatives residing in its historical resources.<sup>43</sup> Nowadays, as the scholarly and scientific understanding of the German language has reached a high level, German scholars and writers "wish to *purify* the language from its foreign elements and to offer instead German words that are similar, and usually better." This, according to Bernfeld, was "important and much needed," so long as it was done "out of profound understanding of the bases of language and with no nationalist fanaticism."<sup>44</sup> Bernfeld thus remodeled his main criticism, presenting the effort at enriching the German language as a slow process that corresponded the organic growth of German science and nationhood. According to this view, the committee, led by unprofessional activists, was accelerating haphazardly Hebrew's expansion. To prove Masie's insufficient mastery of Hebrew, he pointed out some grammatical mistakes in his article, one of them a "crude Germanism."

Bernfeld brought forth the division between the two "lives" of Hebrew—as a spoken language, in which the contact with other languages could endanger its nobleness and purity, and as a literary and scholarly language, whose linguistic resources were still remote from the precision and wealth of modern languages. As he put it in an earlier article, "the Hebrew language stands halfway between the poles of a spoken national language and a dead literary language."<sup>45</sup> In an article from 1912, Bernfeld argued that the present efforts to broaden Hebrew were unlikely to prove successful, because "in our Hebrew, scientific thought has not grown yet. Once it widens and deepens, no doubt that our language would grow and deepen as well."<sup>46</sup> Bernfeld's division between the two dimensions of language—a division his interlocutors in Palestine rejected in principle—drew on his view of the German language. Since Luther, German had steadily gained richness and prestige, thus consolidating the unity of the German people. The establishment of the German state appeared then as the political embodiment of the harmonious convergence of spoken and written German.

The exchange between Bernfeld and Masie revolved around the proper way to expand Hebrew, yet it also involved different ways of assessing the legacy of German nationalism and the role of the German language in its development. Bernfeld employed Ahad Ha-Am's idea of scholarly and literary growth as preceding and enabling national liberation. In this connection, German represented a modern fusion of cultural, religious, and national unity. Masie, for his part, reclaimed German language ideology by emphasizing the proactive role of the German Academy, and by viewing language evolution as a dynamic process animated by constant use.

German had an additional layer of significance in Bernfeld's worldview, namely in its role in modern Jewish societies. In the preface to his translation of the Bible, he overviewed the tradition of Bible translations and praised Mendelssohn's translation for its aesthetic and social value, describing it as "epochal" and as a "historical necessity."<sup>47</sup> With regard to the ensuing translations completed by Mendelssohn's disciples, Bernfeld saw them as suffering from insufficient mastery of the Hebrew sources and as lacking a linguistic sensibility (*Sprachgefühl*) for the Hebrew language.<sup>48</sup> The translation into "pure German," in Bernfeld's narrative, substituted in the first decades of the nineteenth century the older Judeo-German versions, and "penetrated Galicia, Hungary, and even Russia and Poland," becoming a "significant cultural element among the Jewish people."<sup>49</sup> His depiction emphasized unambiguously the translation's importance in unifying Western and Eastern Jewries.

Bernfeld also dwelled on the translation published in 1838 by Leopold Zunz, who wished to remain loyal to the Hebrew words and syntax. The result, according to Bernfeld, turned out to be "neither German, nor a translation."<sup>50</sup> In his own translation, Bernfeld sought to incorporate modern philological and biblical scholarship in accessible, clear German, while remaining loyal to the air of the original Hebrew. This translation, he hoped, "would again make the Bible native to the house of Israel."<sup>51</sup> Reviewers in the German Jewish press indeed praised Bernfeld for achieving these goals.<sup>52</sup> Bernfeld then positioned his translation as mediating between Mendelssohn's disciples' translation and Zunz's translation. Apart from the Pentateuch—translated by Mendelssohn himself—the former was insufficiently attuned to the original Hebrew. The latter adhered "slavishly" to the Hebrew original.

Bernfeld's translation would strike a balance between the two, extracting the Hebrew tone while keeping the text German.

The tradition of German Jewish biblical translations was closely linked to German Protestants' "return to the Bible" since the eighteenth century, as theologians, thinkers, and writers inscribed ideas of enlightenment, nationhood, and modernity into the Bible in scholarship and translation.<sup>53</sup> As Naomi Seidman and Abigail Gillman show, Jewish translators were part of this phenomenon. They not only retained the original order of the books but also retrieved Jewish hermeneutical and poetic traditions that had been subverted in Christian editions of the Bible. Moreover, German Jewish translations reaffirmed Jews' historical roots while exhibiting their attachment to German language and culture. The meaning of this attachment was a matter of dispute between different factions of German Jewry. The translations were therefore part of this polemic, with different translations giving different interpretations of Jewish tradition and its transmission through the German language.<sup>54</sup>

Bernfeld's ambition to revive a sense of familiarity with the Bible through its German translation built then on two nineteenth-century trajectories, one German Jewish, the other Jewish-European. In his 1889 contribution to *Ha-Asif* (discussed in Chapter 3) Bernfeld acknowledged and praised German's pedagogic role in Jewish societies. In his twentieth-century writings, this acknowledgment was no longer made explicit, yet it continued to underlie Bernfeld's engagement with the German language. His simultaneous work in Hebrew and German had a practical purpose, but it was not only practical. His commitment to Hebrew was unequivocal, yet so was his recognition of German's historical role in modern Jewry. Bernfeld's analogy between Hebrew and German had a rhetorical function, but it was not only rhetorical. It is tempting to presume that for Jewish scholars, German "bore no emotional or theological relation to the classical sources."<sup>55</sup> Hebraists, including Bernfeld himself, often reiterated this argument, binding together German and other non-Jewish languages. What this approach overlooks are the historical and theological meanings attached to German in Jewish culture.

As discussed in Chapter 1, German had a pivotal role in Jewish liturgy and German Jewish self-understanding across different denominations. What is more, German's prominence in theology and biblical studies, consol-

idated during the nineteenth century, strengthened the affiliation of the German language with the study of the Scriptures.<sup>56</sup> Both Hebrew and German carried then historical and theological loads that bound the two languages to each other. Bernfeld's promotion of Hebrew was thus steeped in nineteenth-century historical legacies and theological sensitivities underlying the Jewish history of the German language.

### Hebrew Monolingualism in Practice

As Bernfeld's quarrel with the committee shows, debates regarding the practical ways in which Hebrew could be promoted became increasingly heated during these years. In the Zionist Congress, German's dominance was a symbolic but serious disruption of the Hebraist cause. In the absence of a language shared by all participants, the congress organizers determined that the participants were free to use any language they wished. Such pragmatic consideration, however, had inevitable ideological implications. Hebraist Zionists increasingly raised their concerns that the lack of linguistic guidelines led to Hebrew's being sidelined from the congress and from its agenda. In the 1907 congress in The Hague, Nahum Sokolow, then the movement's general secretary, issued a proposal to declare Hebrew as the movement and the congress's official language.<sup>57</sup> This included an instruction that the opening speech would be held in Hebrew, while allowing other languages to be used due to "the necessity of popularizing the idea." The proposal received negative responses, chiefly on practical grounds. Belarusian delegate Shimon Rosenbaum argued that Sokolow was in essence expecting Max Nordau "to learn Hebrew within two years so well that he would be able to give his speech in Hebrew." In other words, "we will not hear this speech."<sup>58</sup> Rabbi Salis Daiches, who grew up in Lithuania and graduated from Azriel Hildesheimer's neo-Orthodox rabbinical seminary in Berlin, objected on theological grounds.<sup>59</sup> He argued that as long as Judaism's diasporic condition persisted, Hebrew should not be the language of the congress: "The exile-congress must have an exile-language, so that we keep awake our longing for Hebrew. Decline, then, Sokolow's proposal out of love for the Hebrew language."<sup>60</sup> In this respect, as historian Michael Berkowitz suggests, the use of the German language facilitated Orthodox Jews' participation in the Zionist Congress given their reluctance to use Hebrew in profane domains.<sup>61</sup>

Using an exile language such as German appeared in this framework not merely as a communicative convenience but indeed as a spiritual necessity.

David Wolffsohn, Herzl's successor as the president of the Zionist Organization, stated that in its present form, Sokolow's suggestion "might make the congress a laughingstock." Sokolow proposed a shortened version, in which Hebrew's official status would be of symbolic importance only. The congress approved this version, despite protests from several attendees that the hall was nearly empty during the vote. Wolffsohn proceeded to the next subject on the agenda, as Max Bodenheimer, a German Zionist with no knowledge of Hebrew, interjected humorously—"In Hebrew, please!"

The next congresses continued to be held predominantly in German, although a growing number of speeches were held in Hebrew. At the 1911 congress, a Russian delegate began his speech by reproaching in Hebrew the Zionist delegates for the fact that the official endorsement of Hebrew remained "on paper only." He then added, "However, since I already see angry faces in the hall, I must now defy the rule as well and turn to German."<sup>62</sup> In a discussion on the languages used in Zionist meetings, German delegate Sammy Gronemann was less apologetic, proclaiming that for the sake of proper discussion that would be reflected fairly in the protocols, participants should speak in German rather in Hebrew: "The congress is not merely a demonstration, it deals with serious matters." His request was followed by both applause and protest.<sup>63</sup> In the following congress, delegate Shlomo Bendersky started his speech with festive words in Hebrew but said that he would continue his speech in German as it concerns a "pan-Jewish" matter, which he would like all participants to understand.<sup>64</sup>

At a more practical level, a leading group of Hebraists including Ahad Ha-Am, Shai Hurwitz, and Joseph Klausner decided in 1909 to convene a Hebraist congress that would affirm Hebrew's status as the Jewish national language. Largely impacted by the 1908 Czernowitz Conference and the political momentum of Yiddishism, this congress was intended to rehabilitate Hebrew's position in the Jewish world and help coordinate the efforts to influence the decisions made in the Zionist Congress.<sup>65</sup> A Hebrew congress ultimately did not meet, but a conference with 120 participants and journalists did take place, leading to the establishment of the Association for Hebrew Language and Culture.

In the 1909 conference, the air of a new beginning in Hebraist politics was coupled with discomfort amid Hebrew's precarious position. Nahman Syrkin said: "The doubts regarding the future of our literature should not be hushed up by 'hurray' calls. Hebrew newspapers are discontinuing, new Hebrew books are not being published. On the other hand, Jargon newspapers are sold in hundreds of thousands of copies. And the Hebrew writers, including young nationalists, move to the Jargon. Who can tell if we are not [Hebrew's] last readers."<sup>66</sup> Moreover, not all speakers were able to communicate in Hebrew, a problem that in the political atmosphere of these years could not be marginalized. Martin Buber delivered his speech in German and admitted that he had hesitated whether to appear on the stage, proclaiming, "I have to speak about the Hebrew language in another language because I am not able to think in Hebrew and I cannot bring myself to translate thoughts that I think in a foreign language into my own, but less-familiar language." This predicament, which "reaches far beyond the individual case," was described by Buber as "a tragedy."<sup>67</sup>

Most of the figures behind the association belonged to Hebraism's major literary and political circles in Russia and Germany. In Palestine, the leading activist was Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858–1922), linguist and cofounder of the Hebrew Language Committee, who was identified with his lifelong efforts to revive Hebrew as a vernacular. Moving from Russia to Palestine in 1881, Ben-Yehuda was a proponent of a national, secular, Hebrew-speaking community in Palestine, an idea he had started to entertain in an article published in Smolenskin's *Ha-Shahar* in 1879.<sup>68</sup> Apart from his lexicographical work, Ben-Yehuda edited different Hebrew periodicals and participated in various debates concerning Hebrew's social function, Hebrew education, questions of accent, spelling, and pronunciation.

In 1908, Ben-Yehuda started publishing the first comprehensive modern Hebrew dictionary spanning sixteen volumes. The dictionary emanated from Ben-Yehuda's conviction that to make Hebrew a living, national language, a dictionary would be mandatory. Already in 1895, he published a sample of his projected dictionary, and continued to trace every Hebrew word appearing in ancient texts while coining new words and offering solutions for terms whose meanings were subject to dispute. He and his wife, the writer and Hebraist Hemda Ben-Yehuda, worked intensively to find organizations and persons



who could sponsor the work on the dictionary and its publication. One of the main supporters of the project was the German Jewish, non-Zionist philanthropic organization Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden. The social goal behind the dictionary was manifested in the fact that since 1900 Ben-Yehuda published in the Hebrew press excerpts of the dictionary, meant as a service to the Hebrew-speaking community.<sup>69</sup> He published only five volumes of the dictionary in his lifetime. Other scholars took up the task after Ben-Yehuda's death, completing its publication in 1959. The dictionary included ancient and modern Hebrew words, with each entry including examples from various sources, etymological roots, and the equivalent words in German, French, and English.

Ben-Yehuda asserted in the dictionary's introduction that the vernacularization of Hebrew was part and parcel of the Jewish national endeavor: "Just as the Jews cannot be a truly living people but through their return to the land of their forefathers, so can they not be a living people without returning to the language of their fathers, using it not only in books, in religious and intellectual matters, as Perets ben Moshe [Smolenskin], the editor of *Ha-Shahar* argued, but precisely as a spoken language: adults and children, men and women, in all domains of life, day and night, like all other nations, each nation and its own tongue."<sup>70</sup> In his methodological discussion, Ben-Yehuda drew on nineteenth-century German, French, and English dictionaries and argued for Hebrew's equal status as a historical, national language. To substantiate this point, he compared Hebrew with German given their common role as a "language of the educated," arguing that "as long as a fairly large public uses a language for everyday affairs, even if most of that group is not laypeople, but the *educated ones*, then the language is *alive*, just as, undoubtedly, German literary language called 'High German' is a *living tongue*, even though all scholars of the German language admit that nowhere in Germany is it the common language, but the tongue of scholars and the educated only."<sup>71</sup> Hebrew's historical role, Ben-Yehuda argued, had been similar to that of High German. While Hebrew continued to serve the educated stratum, Jews adopted other tongues such as Aramaic (according to Ben-Yehuda, the historical equivalent of Low German). By juxtaposing Hebrew to German, Ben-Yehuda conceded Hebrew's theological idiosyncrasy so as to gain the esteem of a national, scholarly language.

Ben-Yehuda was deeply inspired by the Grimm Brothers' 1854 *German Dictionary* (*Deutsches Wörterbuch*), a hallmark of nineteenth-century German nation building.<sup>72</sup> He wrote that his goal in composing the dictionary was the same as the one which Jacob Grimm had envisioned for the *Wörterbuch*, namely to build "a *shrine* for the Hebrew tongue, a shrine that would treasure for posterity the entire holy treasure of the entire language."<sup>73</sup> Ben-Yehuda translated word for word Grimm's goal, and repeated the latter's commitment to apply the strictest scientific standards.<sup>74</sup> Elsewhere, he turned to Grimm's dictionary to ascribe national-secular meaning to Hebrew's theological status. When justifying his choice to include obscene language along the words of the Scripture, Ben-Yehuda referred to Grimm in asserting that unlike a practical dictionary designated for the wide public, "in a scientific dictionary, all is Torah."<sup>75</sup> As Hebrew was turning into a language for all realms, it did not need to be separated from mundane and inappropriate words. Yet while Grimm discussed the question of whether a dictionary should take heed of normative matters ("whether this should appear in our decent world"), Ben-Yehuda adapted Grimm's argument to the matter of Hebrew's secularization. His use of the term "Torah" was suggestive in this respect, given that it denoted both the Pentateuch and "teaching," thus capturing both scholarly and theological realms, and, indeed, subverting the separation between the religious and secular use of Hebrew.

Ben-Yehuda hoped his dictionary would advance Hebrew education in the Yishuv. This had been a main focus of Hebraists' activity in these years and a politically volatile theme since the late nineteenth century, as British, French, and German Jewish philanthropic institutions established and funded Jewish schools, requiring that their language and culture be part of the curriculum. Given the scarce resources of Hebrew institutions in the Yishuv, the sponsorship of philanthropic bodies was essential, even if ideologically compromising. In the early 1900s, it was the educational activity of the French Alliance Israélite Universelle that stirred most concern among Hebraist activists and teachers.<sup>76</sup> The schools run by the Hilfsverein were also target of complaints. Ben-Yehuda, who prided himself on raising his children as the first modern Hebrew native speakers, admitted in an article from 1906 that he frequently caught his son, who was attending a Hilfsverein school, "secretly chatting in German."<sup>77</sup>

Hebraist activism in the Yishuv after 1908 assumed a more radical form, amplified by the rise of Yiddishism and sectarian currents in the Ottoman Empire. Vociferous protest emerged in the Hebrew press in 1909 following the launching of Ladino and Yiddish periodicals.<sup>78</sup> The Sephardic Jewish writer Shimon Moyal proposed in 1911 to establish a Zionist newspaper in Arabic so as to create a channel of communication that would appease Arab hostility to the Yishuv. His initiative faced criticism in the Jewish press, including a charge of “assimilatory” tendencies.<sup>79</sup> Similar responses arose when a group of teachers of Arabic offered in 1913 to promote the study of Arabic among Jewish pupils.<sup>80</sup>

In August of the same year, the Hebrew Association met in Vienna. The tone of the speakers was much more confident than in the first meeting, deciding on a series of initiatives to support Hebrew schools and to promote the Hebraist agenda in the upcoming Zionist Congress. Unlike the 1909 conference, some of the speakers addressed explicitly Zionists’ reliance on German. The Hebrew teacher and activist Israel Adler expressed pessimism regarding the prospect of a Hebrew-speaking congress, given the fact that the movement’s leadership could not speak it and the texts published by the congress and the Jewish National Fund were written and printed in German. “How great is the pain,” he added, “that we, people of Erets Israel, spread shekels [donation calls for the Yishuv] in German.”<sup>81</sup> One of the conference’s resolutions was to encourage delegates to speak in Hebrew in the congress. The conference minutes expressed “great sorrow over the saddening reality in which the Zionist Congress is held in a mixture of languages, with Hebrew occupying a very marginal role.”<sup>82</sup>

At the same time, the speakers emphasized the positive developments taking place in Palestine. Klausner discussed Hebrew’s being “a spoken language as well as a language of the soul.”<sup>83</sup> In two sessions the speakers argued whether and how to respond to the anticipated decision to set German as the Technicum’s language of instruction of scientific subjects.<sup>84</sup> When the board of the Hilfsverein decided in November of that year in favor of German, it stirred immediate uproar in the Yishuv. Petitions, demonstrations, and strikes targeted directly the Hilfsverein’s institutions, which, at the time, accounted for 45 percent of the schools in the Yishuv. According to the stated decision, German would “connect the students to the scientific development of

the modern period through one of the greatest cultural languages.”<sup>85</sup> Zionist leaders in the Yishuv claimed the argument was but a cover for German’s imperial interests at the expense of Zionism and the Hebrew language.<sup>86</sup> In depicting the Hebrew-German clash, they employed epic, historic, and religious terms.<sup>87</sup> Zionist member of the Technicum’s advisory board Shmaryahu Levin described the events as a “holy war” and asserted that Zionism was going through a process of “sanctification.”<sup>88</sup> Ben-Yehuda called the Hebraists’ achievement “a miracle” and suggested that the Hilfsverein’s previous involvement in Hebraist efforts gave the entire turn of events the semblance of divine intervention.<sup>89</sup>

As Liora Halperin has argued, German’s role in the controversy was entwined with Hebrew’s inferior position vis-à-vis the cultural and political power of “high” Western languages.<sup>90</sup> Na’ama Sheffi has suggested that the “language war” could also be placed in the context of the Yishuv’s ambivalent approach to German culture and German philanthropic involvement in educational institutions.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, unlike other languages that built up the multilingual reality in Palestine, German had a distinct mobilizing power among grassroots Jewish activists given its historical association with assimilation and its conspicuous role in Western Zionism. In a letter to Ahad Ha-Am, Shmaryahu Levin admitted that the struggle was also a response to British suspicions concerning “the external Germanness of Zionism.”<sup>92</sup> Ahad Ha-Am later argued in the Hebrew and German press that accepting the Hilfsverein demands would strengthen the common allegation that Zionism was a vehicle of German imperial interests in the Middle East.<sup>93</sup>

The Hilfsverein rescinded in February 1914 its initial decision, and the Hebraist camp earned a major victory. The fact that the “war” pertained to Hebrew’s capacity as a language of instruction was both technical and fundamental. The political pressure stirred by Yiddishism and other languages in the Yishuv, alongside the ongoing tensions within Zionism over German’s dominance, boosted Hebraists’ ideological battle. While presented as a struggle for the Yishuv’s political and cultural autonomy, it allowed Hebraists to confront German’s long presence in modern Jewish history as a language of knowledge. It was the convergence of historical and local factors that drew both contemporaries and later Zionist historians to frame the “language war” as a landmark in Jewish history.<sup>94</sup>

The sacred import attached to the Hebraist cause was not a mere rhetorical tool but a central dimension in Hebraists' navigation between secular and religious impulses. German's historical load in modern Jewry lent itself to utilization in Hebraists' political struggles. An apt manifestation of this current can be found in the 1913 Hebraist conference's main event, a speech given by the acclaimed Hebrew poet and essayist Haim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934), who had been residing then in Odessa. His speech, "The Hebrew Book," was published in three installments in a Hebrew periodical and appeared in its better-known, expanded and somewhat revised version in the 1914 protocols of the conference.<sup>95</sup> In his speech, Bialik envisioned a compilation, or "gathering" (*kinus*), of Hebrew literature since ancient times to the present, a modern version of ancient Jewish practices of *hatima* (the consolidation of the Hebrew Bible) and *genizah*. Bialik's speech drew wide attention as an eloquent proclamation to unite classic and modern Hebrew literature, forming a chain of continuity between Jewish literary tradition and modern nationhood, harbored by the Hebrew language and embodied in it. Bialik's speech was also a literary and political event, as it aroused opposition from writers such as Mikhah Yosef Berdyczewski, Marcus Ehrenpreis, and David Frishman, who advocated a break with Jewish literary traditions and a turn to European literature in an attempt to discover new modes of expression.<sup>96</sup> For our discussion, Bialik's speech is of relevance because it addressed in a novel way the relationship between Hebrew literature and modern Jewish scholarship in German.

A book, Bialik posited, "is not an entity in itself, a lone and independent creature," but the "historical necessity of its nation," without which it remains powerless.<sup>97</sup> The diasporic dispersal and multilingualism of Jews have led to the loss of access to the finest of Hebrew literary productivity, to those texts that carry the nation's spiritual vitality. The *kinus* would address this predicament by presenting Hebrew literature in its national wholeness. Unlike earlier anthological and encyclopedic enterprises, Bialik's envisioned compilation would evaluate literature based on its national significance and literary quality, not on religious parameters: "The era of the *sanctity* of the book may have passed, but its *honor* has not gone away."<sup>98</sup> A group of experts would carry out a careful selection and take stock of Hebrew's literary heritage both for its preservation and for invigorating national sentiments. The

result would be “scientific in its concealed root and popular in its exterior form,” thus stirring a process of national mobilization and education.<sup>99</sup>

One of the main challenges of Bialik’s enterprise, he acknowledged, was the matter of Jewish writings in foreign languages. Despite the fact that Hebrew had always been at the center of Judaism, Jews have produced works of national significance in foreign languages, whether because of social necessity or to lack of sufficient proficiency in Hebrew. Bialik addressed also the category of works written by Jews who “knew Hebrew, yet for different, non-national reasons, wrote their works in the state language.” It was these individuals, Bialik continued, “that we condemn for hurting the Jewish collective in their country with an unrecoverable blow. . . . They have brought the remnant of their country to a crisis, to decline, to complete disintegration!”<sup>100</sup> Though speaking in general terms, a short clause in the following sentence revealed whom Bialik had in mind: “Nonetheless, despite our bitterness toward these people, Jews such as Zunz, Geiger, and their like—we cannot do away with them!” While rejecting their linguistic choices, Bialik still believed that giving their texts new form and national meaning in a Hebrew translation could repair the damage they had caused: “We do not renounce the *content* of our libraries that are spread in corners of the world, but their external costume, their tongue. The content is ours and it will return to our possession. *All Hebrew works in foreign tongues will be redeemed!*”<sup>101</sup>

Bialik had already conveyed his critical view of German Jewish scholarship in a speech delivered at a Hebraists’ conference in Kiev in 1910, in which he first entertained the idea of the *kinus*. He asserted that “the multiplicity of tongues and the creation of science and literature in different languages, in foreign languages” was the “greatest blow that Hebrew literature had known.” Ancient Jewish scholars had used other tongues for political and historical reasons but continued to place Hebrew at the heart of their conception of Judaism. Their books “were not written in these tongues as the tongue of Jewish thought.” The first “spiritual converts,” however, did precisely that, and have in this way “delayed the redemption of our language and its development, and since then our literature has dwindled gradually, and whoever wants to study Hebrew science must first learn many languages.” He held that the study of Judaism (*hokhmat yisrael*) must be “taken away from the hands” of these scholars. In Bialik’s view, there were many Hebrew scholars,

“but they have no place where they could develop. Who knows how many Zunzes and Geigers we would have among us if we only had a literature and a literary institute for scholarly work?”<sup>102</sup>

Although he saw Jewish Western scholarship as a menace to Hebrew, Bialik also conveyed implicit appreciation to figures such as Zunz and Geiger, who had the skills and passion for the modern study of Judaism. Their fault, however, lay in their belief that German could substitute Hebrew as a language of Jewish knowledge. Challenging the superiority of Hebrew in the realm of Jewish knowledge had not merely intellectual repercussions but national ones. The fundamental significance he ascribed to scholarly writing also underlay Bialik’s ambivalence toward German Jewish scholars. In his vision, religious categories of the Jewish literary tradition would give way to modern, historical categories of Jewish collectivity. Yet such categories were largely a result of nineteenth-century Western currents adopted and nourished, *inter alia*, by German Jewish scholars. Indeed, Bialik shared with German Jewish scholars the drive to redeem Jewish literature from oblivion and to release it from a religious framework.<sup>103</sup>

Perhaps so as not to provoke the Western attendees in the Vienna conference, Bialik articulated his criticism of Western Jewish scholars in mostly general terms and focused his criticism on Yiddishists. In the written, expanded version, however, he elaborated his criticism of German Jewish scholars. In Bialik’s view, they had been certain that by studying Judaism as a subject equal to all others, the granting of equal rights to Jews would follow suit.<sup>104</sup> Bialik contrasted their position with Eastern European scholars who devoted their effort to creating “the new Hebrew literature.” Three generations have passed, he continued, “and the prophecy of the ‘Western scholars’ did not materialize.” As publications of ancient assets grew in proportion, “the ‘right’ of the owners over those assets waned.” German Jewish scholarship “has placed the foreign language in our house of study,” allowing the spirit of Israel to assimilate in foreign lands.<sup>105</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Bialik’s idea of *kinus* largely defied Judaism’s traditional conceptions of the Jewish canon. He sought to apply secular-national criteria instead of religious ones. Nevertheless, Bialik’s critique of German Jews’ linguistic proclivity drew substantially on the vocabulary of religious exclusion and messianism. Bialik labeled German Jews as “spiritual converts”

who were standing in the way of their people and language's "redemption." In his narrative, the language choice of German Jewish scholars amounted to historical treason directed against the Jewish people. That said, when turning to operative terms, Bialik envisioned cooperation between "our brethren, men of science from the west" who would offer "their sifting skills and erudition," and the Eastern scholars, who would provide "the total Hebrew style and the living internal spirit." By working side by side, "this 'divine work' would be attained in its deserved perfectness." Bialik then asked rhetorically, "Is it not the time that the study of Judaism be united with the tongue of Israel for the sake of their revival and the spirit of Israel?" This, according to Bialik, would allow Jewish scholarship to wean itself from the apologetic appeal to other nations and would connect its past-focused orientation with the vitality of Hebraism.

Bialik's speech was a powerful articulation of Hebraists' struggle for political and intellectual preeminence in the process of nation building. The idea of *kinus* was to strengthen Hebrew's position as a self-sufficient scholarly language, thus overcoming a major legacy of Jewish multilingualism. In his wish to integrate modern Jewish knowledge into Hebrew, Bialik expressed his trust in Hebrew's ripened capacities in this realm, after long being contested by German Jewish scholarship. Strikingly, despite reproaching the ideological premises underlying German Jews' proclivity for German, he saw them as harbingers of the Jewish national spirit. Their work would have to be reappropriated and carefully incorporated into the Hebrew canon. Bialik indeed saw the German Jewish scholarly skills as valuable for the Hebraist cause while decoupling these virtues from the political agenda he associated with them. Bialik sought to redirect—not reject—the cultural and intellectual capacities exercised in German Jewish scholarship so as to mobilize them for a modern Hebrew culture in the making.

Bialik, like Ahad Ha-Am and Bernfeld, saw literary and spiritual revival as the core of the Jewish national cause. It was conditioned by a return to the Land of Israel and to the Hebrew language—but not reducible to them. Like Bernfeld, he was critical of the Yishuv's language activism and had little respect for Ben-Yehuda's secular, speech-centered Hebraism.<sup>106</sup> Bernfeld and Bialik's stances on German Jewry captured two sides of a driving tension of Jewish nationalists' approach to Hebrew. They both saw Jewish



scholarship in German as foreign to Judaism given its singular bond with the Hebrew tongue. At the same time, they also saw it as a critical asset of the Jewish intellectual world. Bialik wrote with latent envy of Geiger's and Zunz's intellectual achievements, of which modern Hebrew scholarship was in desperate need. Bernfeld conveyed more explicitly his appreciation of the Berlin Haskalah and the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*' feats. Bernfeld and Bialik differed in how they perceived the historical role of the German language in Jewish history. In Bernfeld's view, Jewish scholars' reliance on German had resulted from greater, irresistible historical forces. Moreover, he acknowledged the pedagogical significance of German's entry into Eastern European areas. His stance regarding Hebrew was largely structured by what he perceived as the contours of the Jewish diasporic condition in the modern period, for good or ill.

Bialik, on the contrary, ascribed full agency to German Jewish scholars' linguistic choice and construed it as a voluntary submission to German culture. While emphasizing German Jewish scholarship's unique, "non-national" features, he located it within a longer tradition of Jews who withdrew from the Hebrew language and its national and intellectual functions. The differing historical perspectives of Bernfeld and Bialik also structured each other's proscriptive views. Bernfeld saw Jewish linguistic proclivities as a product of the times, and therefore as beyond reproach. Indeed, Bernfeld was himself a product of the Galician Haskalah and of the central role of German in it. He did not find a contradiction in his own extensive contribution to the German Jewish corpus while writing on the supremacy of Hebrew in the realm of Jewish knowledge. Bialik, however, challenged the very distinction between Hebrew and Jewish, ultimately subsuming the latter to the former. He called for a more direct engagement with Hebrew culture through his proposed project, thus contributing actively to the aspiration to end Jewish multilingualism. As he put it in 1910 using a Kabbalistic trope, "We must go back to the language of Hebrew literature and return to it all the scattered sparks."<sup>107</sup>

"The Hebrew Book" followed late nineteenth-century Hebraists such as Smolenskin and Sokolow by employing the dichotomy between Hebrew and German scholarship. Yet while early Hebraists advocated a practical division of roles between the two, Bialik sought to abolish it. In this respect, Bialik's

speech fit neatly into the Hebraist agenda of the early 1910s, insofar as it provided a literary-historical dimension to the monolingual cause. “The Hebrew Book” mirrored a dominant realization among Hebraists in the years leading to the First World War. It dictated that on the quest for strengthening Hebrew political and cultural status, German’s legacy in modern Jewish history had to be confronted.

### A Jewish Prophecy in German: Ahad Ha-Am Translating Pinsker

The previous sections examined how Hebraists assessed German’s role in Jewish history and its meaning for present concerns. We conclude this chapter by turning to the German language itself. In January 1914, a period in which Hebraists were engaged in intense agitation yielding significant achievements in Palestine, the “Society for the Support of Jewish Farmers and Artisans in Syria and Palestine,” better known as the “Odessa Committee,” asked Ahad Ha-Am to translate Pinsker’s *Autoemancipation!* into Hebrew as part of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Russia’s official recognition of the movement. Ahad Ha-Am had never published any translation.<sup>108</sup> Nonetheless, he agreed to undertake the task, writing that the pamphlet had been dear to him both for its intrinsic value and due to his own “personal memories” attached to it.<sup>109</sup>

The publication was a tribute to one of the movement’s founding figures and a celebration of Hebrew’s ascended status as a national, living language.<sup>110</sup> The choice of the translator was also infused with symbolic significance—an authoritative ideologue in the Jewish national landscape and a controversial, yet highly esteemed guardian of Hebrew language and culture. Ahad Ha-Am wanted that his translation “would not be inferior to the origin, so that it becomes of a classic value to our literature for generations to come.”<sup>111</sup> In a letter to Nahum Sokolow, he expressed his wish to make the pamphlet sound “as if it were written in Hebrew.”<sup>112</sup> However, he admitted that while working on the translation, “it became clear to me how hard it is to translate this text, especially into Hebrew, and especially *for me*.”<sup>113</sup> What is it that made the translation task so demanding—especially into Hebrew, especially for him? It seems likely that Ahad Ha-Am’s conception of Hebraism and critique of Hebrew literature put him in an uneasy position when setting out

to translate Pinsker. To probe the ideological complexity Ahad Ha-Am was facing, it is useful to present first some of his main views on Hebrew and its role in Jewish nationalism.

In several articles written since the mid-1890s, Ahad Ha-Am addressed the depth of Judaism's linguistic problem, which, for him, largely reflected its political and spiritual problems. He was particularly preoccupied with the lack of a modern, viable intellectual sphere that could revitalize what he called, in Herderian terms, "the spirit of the nation." Like Bialik, Ahad Ha-Am ascribed superior significance to written over spoken language as the carrier of the Jewish national spirit. In "Torah of the Heart," published in 1894, Ahad Ha-Am posited that unlike bookish peoples, Jews have been merely "the People of the Book," living around a holy book and failing to respond to broader cultural and political currents like "healthy peoples" do. By relying on the Book as the sole, fossilized, moral authority, Judaism has deteriorated spiritually.<sup>114</sup> The submission to the holy text created an oral tradition of interpretation of the text, yet one that had little bearing on moral and literary impulses. It was only the kindling of a Jewish cultural and educational vitality that ought to stand, according to Ahad Ha-Am, at the core of the Jewish national revival.

In the same year, Ahad Ha-Am initiated a Hebrew encyclopedia of Jewish knowledge. Its goal would be to engage Hebrew readers with Jewish knowledge, thus facilitating and encouraging further inquiry into Jewish history and culture.<sup>115</sup> The encyclopedic endeavor—which never materialized—was an operative measure to deal with what Ahad Ha-Am saw as Judaism's spiritual feebleness. In his view, genuine, self-reflective intellectual work expands language, and revitalizes its national spirit. In this, he drew on the postulate of Herder, namely that language and thought depend inextricably on each other.<sup>116</sup> Hebrew had experienced literary and scholarly surge in the postbiblical period, contributing to Hebrew's capacity in dealing with abstract and analytic matters. Yet as Hebrew was "dead," or unspoken, it failed to evolve as a poetic and emotional language.<sup>117</sup> Since the late Middle Ages, cultural and political currents had transformed European societies, but Jews remained confined to their religious canon, thus leaving Hebrew stagnant. The Hebrew writers of the Haskalah rendered the language more embellished, but they failed to produce meaningful literature and science. Ahad

Ha-Am criticized them for relying exclusively on the repository of biblical Hebrew—and neglecting the Mishna and Talmud—and for failing to develop Hebrew language and thought. Hebrew attempts at philosophizing were characterized by pathos and lengthiness, proving unable to gain “accuracy of clear thought and to subordinate the poetic spirit to logical order.”<sup>118</sup>

Hebrew’s deficiency as a language of knowledge was for Ahad Ha-Am a direct result of Hebrew writers’ resort to light, popular, or politically motivated pieces. Substantiating the idea that language and thought evolve in conjunction with each other, he brought up German, “the most philosophical language at present.”<sup>119</sup> He alluded to Leibniz’s pioneering attempts to “write down his thoughts in German,” requiring him to rely heavily on foreign terms. Yet over time, as scholarly work accumulated and evolved, German could convey freely scientific content. Going forward, Ahad Ha-Am held that Hebrew should renew its scholarly tradition by uniting its historical and linguistic resources through openness to modern knowledge and to the spectrum of expression it requires. In the inaugural essay of his journal *Ha-Shiloah*, he posited that literature could shape the spirit of the people either by reaching its readers’ emotions, through literature and poetry, or their minds, through measured and rigid thought and analysis. It was to the latter that *Ha-Shiloah* was devoted, as Ahad Ha-Am found it superior to the former and more urgent for the Jewish national cause.<sup>120</sup> *Ha-Shiloah* was designed to enlighten Hebrew readers and equip them with “apt concepts from various respectable fields” that would shed light on Jewish culture and history.<sup>121</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am’s view of Hebrew was also informed by the Herderian idea of languages as organisms that carry distinct qualities, corresponding to the life of the nation and its spirit.<sup>122</sup> In a discussion of translations, Ahad Ha-Am had misgivings about the pretension “to have Hebrew convey in a natural manner European cultural property merely by placing it from right to left.”<sup>123</sup> The process of cultural transmission had to take place through a slow, self-reflective process of recognizing aspects of foreign texts and searching laboriously for paths of intersection between the origin and the target language: “A national language that truly lives among its people, in which their thoughts are born and shaped naturally in the movement of their souls since their childhood, such language gives them much more than what appears in

its vocabulary.” A translation into a national language filters the original text through “obscure fractures of thought and emotion, rooted in the national and historical life of a people, and which no one from the outside who knows the language but who does not live in it, could comprehend and feel.” Yet at present, this “natural ‘digestion’ process” has been limited due to Judaism’s lack of national forces that could stir it.

In a programmatic debate with Mikhah Yosef Berdyczewski, Ahad Ha-Am opposed his adoption of Nietzsche’s worldview and attempt to apply it to Jewish concerns. He dwelled on Berdyczewski’s endorsement of Nietzsche’s idea of transvaluation of values (*Umwertung aller Werte*). This idea, Ahad Ha-Am stated, “was not created among us and did not emerge from our needs but was rather found by our writers ‘in another realm’ and was taken as it was, seeking to valorize Israel without contemplating first whether ‘the soil of Israel’ could absorb it.”<sup>124</sup> Ahad Ha-Am did not deny that Nietzsche’s thought could be fruitful for studying the historical and spiritual transformation of Judaism, but he blamed Hebrew Nietzscheans for “neglecting the innovative aspects of this lore, taking from it only the ‘new word’ and the ‘Aryan’ element which its creator ingrained in it, and with these they came to the people of Israel to redeem it in our age!”<sup>125</sup> Adopting the idea that concepts carry distinct essences that are entwined with the life of a nation, Ahad Ha-Am sought to defend Hebrew thought from surrendering its historical and moral essence to foreign ideas and languages. Hebrew, according to Ahad Ha-Am, has been the ultimate vehicle of Jewish culture. Only literature written in Hebrew “can be considered as national literature.”<sup>126</sup> For this reason, its intrinsic qualities for the Jewish nation should not be conflated offhandedly with the intrinsic qualities of other languages and peoples.

Although Ahad Ha-Am was skeptical of the attempts to revive Hebrew as a spoken language, the events around 1908 and the advancement of Hebrew schools he witnessed in the early 1910s led him to support Hebraists’ efforts at raising its national status in the Yishuv.<sup>127</sup> He wrote in 1910 an essay on the Hebraist-Yiddishist quarrel, defending Hebrew’s singular import to Jewish nationhood.<sup>128</sup> Ahad Ha-Am was one of three members who resigned from the Technicum’s advisory board in protest of its initial decision, in what proved a turning point in the so-called language war. In an article published in the German and Hebrew press in January 1914, Ahad Ha-Am depicted

a more positive image of the state of Hebrew than the one he diagnosed at the turn of the century. He acknowledged the development made in recent years, as “the spirit of Israel is reviving to a new life, its ancient language is rejuvenating and merging with the life of the people, and new Jews, unseen in the diaspora, Jews in their languages, education, aspiration and in their entire being, are taking shape in the Hebrew schools.”<sup>129</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am did not deny that German was better equipped to transmit scientific material to students, and in private correspondence he described Zionist demands as “radical” and hardly realizable.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, Ahad Ha-Am’s critical views were later quoted in Hebrew posters distributed by the Hilfsverein.<sup>131</sup> While admitting that the possibility of teaching sciences in Hebrew “has not arrived yet,” he believed in its ability to do so in the future.<sup>132</sup> Despite his discomfort with Zionists’ conduct, Ahad Ha-Am endorsed the demand to set Hebrew as the language of instruction, seeing in this an opportunity to stir national sentiments among the significant portion of Jewish population that was generally indifferent to the national cause. In this sense, Ahad Ha-Am’s translation was a symbolic contribution in a period of intense political agitation around the language question.

An additional element that sheds light on Ahad Ha-Am’s translation concerns his appreciation of Leon Pinsker. Since the mid 1880s, Ahad Ha-Am belonged to a circle of activists who worked under Pinsker during his term as the president of Hibbat Zion in Odessa. While Pinsker advocated political action that resonated more strongly among political Zionists, Ahad Ha-Am saw in Pinsker an ideological precursor in his elevation of national pride and in his critical analysis of Judaism’s spiritual weakness. He wrote that on his deathbed in 1891, Pinsker brought up in his ears the idea of a “spiritual center” in Palestine, which Ahad Ha-Am advocated in his Zionist writings.<sup>133</sup>

Ahad Ha-Am also identified with Pinsker’s broad historical perspective and his precedence of a farseeing national vision over short-term political calculations. “Pinsker was preoccupied by ideals, not by practical concerns,” he wrote in an essay dedicated to his memory. By doing so, he placed Pinsker within the tradition of Jewish prophecy, which revolves around radicalism and moral truth. Pinsker’s “pure idealism” stood in sharp contrast to Herzl’s Zionist vision.<sup>134</sup> Ahad Ha-Am saw Herzl’s *Judenstaat* as a weak call

when compared with *Autoemancipation!*'s "profound reason and superior style." Herzl's text may have had some similarities to Pinsker's call for action, but "he seemed to have translated Pinsker from the language of the ancient prophets to contemporary journalistic language."<sup>135</sup> Ahad Ha-Am's invocation of prophecy was not mere hyperbole but a constant feature of his thought. His understanding of prophecy consisted in the ability, lucidity, and courage to confront the nation with a radical, uncompromising, moral truth.<sup>136</sup>

In several ways, translating *Autoemancipation!* put Ahad Ha-Am's views of Hebraism, language, and prophecy to the test. His assertion that *Autoemancipation!* had a prophetic quality was in tension with his emphasis on the singular bond between Jewish national spirit and the Hebrew language. The continuity of Jewish tradition lay predominantly in the Hebrew language, and Jewish prophecy was in his mind a distinct feature of the Hebraic tradition. According to this logic, *Autoemancipation!* appeared as an exception, because it conveyed Jewish national and moral features characteristic of Jewish prophecy while being communicated in German. This tension became even more intricate considering the extent to which, as discussed in Chapter 2, Pinsker drew on various ideas and terms deeply rooted in German national, philosophical, and scientific thought. His text expressed Jewish national sentiments but was crafted from "foreign" ideas and concepts.

Writing to the Odessa Committee about his difficulty at translating, Ahad Ha-Am ascribed it partly to the fact that when read in its original version "one is drawn to the poetic style and fails to notice its logical flaws." In Hebrew, however, "the fog lifts." Ahad Ha-Am referred here to Hebrew's economic grammar and vocabulary that dispelled the convolutedness and allure which the German language exerted on the reader. "Our language," he wrote to the Odessa Committee after completing a draft of the first pages, "lacks the features which comprise it [the pamphlet's poetic style]." When the flaws surface, the "impression is weakened."<sup>137</sup>

What Ahad Ha-Am encountered in this translation was the understanding that the emotional and analytical power of the pamphlet were ultimately intermingled. In his letter, Ahad Ha-Am wrote that he did his best "to cover the absence of a *logical connection* between the parts [of the text], the sudden leaps which the author makes from one matter to another, as if ask-

ing his readers to jump between them through all parts of the process of thought, which he was holding from its two edges, skipping the links between them." Ahad Ha-Am admitted, however, that he had not been able to carry it through successfully, wondering whether this had to do "with my own spiritual tendency and style." He did not elaborate on the nature of that "spiritual tendency," yet it seems plausible that he was referring to the encounter between the work of translation and the Hebraist ideas he had been propagating. After long advocating the adherence to clear, logical, analytic thought for Hebrew's revival, *Autoemancipation!* confronted Ahad Ha-Am with the convergence of analytic and emotional language—realms he tended to perceive as separate. Indeed, part of what Ahad Ha-Am had seen as the prophetic power of *Autoemancipation!* appeared to be a rhetorical means that concealed logical leaps.

Certain features of the translation mirrored Ahad Ha-Am's struggle to find areas of interaction between Pinsker's German and his own Hebrew. For instance, he chose not to translate the pamphlet's title, leaving it in its original Roman letters (fig. 8). In a letter to Alter Druyanow, he explained that this choice had to do with the fact that, first, "there is no Hebrew word which would convey the term adequately," and, second, that this word "is so organically bound up with the essence of the pamphlet."<sup>138</sup> However, Ahad Ha-Am did integrate the term into the body of the text, either through the Russian equivalent—*emantsipatsya*—or by using the Hebrew words for "self-liberation" (*hishtabrerut atsmi*).<sup>139</sup> He also encountered difficulties in translating medical jargon—central to Pinsker's arguments and rhetoric—into Hebrew. He left the terms "Judophobia" in a Hebrew transliteration but omitted the word "Anorexia"—which Pinsker employed to express the lack of national self-consciousness among Jews—using instead the Hebrew word for "danger."<sup>140</sup> Ahad Ha-Am was thus inconsistent in his absorption and modification of foreign terms and concepts into modern Hebrew.

This tension is related to a deeper concern regarding the manner in which *Autoemancipation!* was to be read "as if it were written in Hebrew." In various cases, Ahad Ha-Am used Hebrew religious terms and proverbs. For instance, while Pinsker used the word *Brandmal* ("brand" or "stigma") to denote the disgrace of the Jewish condition, Ahad Ha-Am used the Hebrew term for "mark of Cain," thus attaching to that image theological sensitivities



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FIGURE 8. Cover page of Ahad Ha-Am's draft of his translation of *Autoemancipation!* National Library of Israel, Ahad Ha-Am Archives, ARC.4\*791 6 1873.24. Courtesy of the National Library of Israel.

drawn from the biblical story. Pinsker suggested sending an *Expedition*—a term taken from contemporary bureaucratic and colonial language—to examine possible territorial destinations, whereas Ahad Ha-Am used the word *mal'akhim*, which denotes both “angels” and “delegates,”<sup>141</sup> and which in the book of Numbers were sent by Israel to the land of the Amorites. Pinsker discussed the option of emigration to “Palästina,” whereas Ahad Ha-Am used the biblical “Erets Yisrael.” In his translation of Pinsker’s last sentence—“help yourselves, and God will help you”—Ahad Ha-Am failed to find a suitable way to use the Hebrew word for “help” and turned instead to the verb “redeem,” which has a starker messianic connotation.<sup>142</sup> When urging Jews to act, Pinsker proclaimed “now or never!” (“Jetzt oder nie!”), a phrase borrowed from Schiller’s *Wilhelm Tell*, a play associated with Germany’s rising national consciousness during the Napoleonic Wars. Yet in the Hebrew version, Ahad Ha-Am used Hillel’s more contemplative proverb: “If not now, when?” His evocation of an ancient Hebrew proverb rendered Pinsker more Hebrew, but it thus lost the robust, nationalist tone of the original call. The exclamation point in the German text turned into a question mark in Hebrew.

Ahad Ha-Am’s frequent turn to the linguistic resources of ancient Judaism situated *Autoemancipation!* within an ideological and stylistic framework from which its original author asked to depart. What Ahad Ha-Am perhaps did not—or could not—take into consideration was the fact that Pinsker’s rhetoric, which inspired different circles of early Jewish nationalists, was largely centered on rationalist, scientific language. *Autoemancipation!* was embedded in a series of nineteenth-century German discourses that revolved around ideas of objectivity, concreteness, and empiricism. Indeed, this kind of rhetoric was uncommon in Hebrew nationalist language of the early 1880s, and it was one of the main reasons it acquired in the next decades the status of a founding text. Ahad Ha-Am’s search for a similar register in the Hebrew language led him to place ancient Hebrew at the heart of Pinsker’s secular, nationalist call. Partly committing what he had reproached Haskalah writers for, Ahad Ha-Am toned down Pinsker’s scientific and political language, and bolstered its religious undertone. In this respect, science and religiosity were the realms through which German and Hebrew could interact effectively.

Ahad Ha-Am's translation reflected his confidence in the quest for Hebrew's political and linguistic autonomy. At the same time, it also exposed its limits.

The war in Europe prevented the translation from being published. The Odessa Committee was dissolved during the Russian Revolution, and the entire project did not materialize. The translation was published only in 1921 as part of a booklet edited by Joseph Klausner, marking the hundredth anniversary of Pinsker's birth.<sup>143</sup> Ahad Ha-Am received positive responses about the translation. In a letter to Ahad Ha-Am, Alter Druyanow reported that he showed Bialik a fragment of Ahad Ha-Am's translation, and Bialik was profoundly impressed, adding that Ahad Ha-Am "succeeded much better than he did (he also tried to translate a few pages)."<sup>144</sup> Klausner wrote to Ahad Ha-Am that the translation was "masterful."<sup>145</sup> Still, Ahad Ha-Am noted disappointedly that despite positive remarks from his acquaintances, the translation remained unnoticed.<sup>146</sup> In the wake of the war and amid the British entry to Palestine, such a translation was neither a literary nor a political event. Yet despite remaining a marginal part of the history of Hebraism, it captured a moment of interaction between the ideals of Hebraism and the multilayered presence of German in Jewish nationalism.

As a language that carried various sensitivities of European Jewish history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, German was prone to surface in different forms and contexts around Hebraists' striving for political self-reliance. German also mirrored the complex ways in which religious and national voices interacted within Hebraist thought. For Bernfeld, the German language represented the fusion of national and religious impulses in both German, Jewish, and German Jewish history. In Ben-Yehuda, German served as an instrument to argue for Hebrew's status as a national vernacular and to integrate its religious roots into a modern national framework. For Bialik, German was a crucial vector in a ruinous phase of modern Jewish history, leading to "spiritual conversion" that jeopardized the integrity of Judaism and relegated Hebrew's stature. For this reason, Hebrew had to be emancipated from German's presence by overcoming it in the realm in which it had the deepest impact: Jewish knowledge. Last, Ahad Ha-Am confronted in his translation the German language's double bind, entailing a modern, rationalist register that Hebrew could not easily contain.

## MARTIN BUBER'S LANGUAGE PROBLEM

### *German Zionists and Hebrew Literacy*

The work of translation was entwined with political and theological questions not only for translators from German into Hebrew but also for those translating from Hebrew into German. In 1926, Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig published the first volume of their translation of the Bible into German. The translation's main goal was to convey the rhythm and semantic features of the Hebrew Bible, leading its readers to encounter a language very different from conventional literary German. Buber and Rosenzweig sought to generate in the reader a sense of unfamiliarity, a reminder of the fact that the Bible was not conceived in German but in ancient Hebrew, the language of God. Their project encapsulated the linguistic conundrum German Jews faced: it offered a path to the Bible through a Hebraized German, and encouraged the reader to pursue Hebrew.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it confirmed that the Bible in its original language was beyond reach. While striving to build a bridge to Hebrew, it solidified the dependence of German Jews on their native tongue, German.

Buber and Rosenzweig's biographical trajectories differed considerably. Buber (1878–1965) was born in Vienna to an orthodox family, and was exposed from a young age to ancient Hebrew. Rosenzweig (1886–1929) was born in Kassel to an assimilated family and turned to Hebrew and Jewish theology as a university student. Buber actively supported the Zionist movement, whereas Rosenzweig was quite critical of it. However, they were both

committed to the dissemination of Jewish culture in the German language, culminating in the translation of the Bible. After Rosenzweig's death, Buber continued working on the translation and completed it in 1961 in Jerusalem, to which he immigrated in 1938.

In recent decades, historians, theologians, and linguists have paid considerable attention to the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible, exploring its significance in interwar German Jewish culture, its debt to Jewish theology, German philosophy, and contemporary linguistic theories, and its place within longer German Jewish traditions of biblical translation.<sup>2</sup> This chapter situates the Buber-Rosenzweig translation within the Jewish language politics during and after the First World War. Following Germany's defeat and the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire, German lost its role as a *lingua franca* of Jewish national politics in Central and Eastern Europe. This was part of a broader process whereby German's status as a global language declined.<sup>3</sup> Concurrently, it was Britain that, upon its entry into Palestine in 1917, became the imperial center of gravity of Jewish nationalism. With its recognition by the British Mandate, the Jewish community in Palestine gained supreme ideological significance in Jewish politics.

Amid these developments, Zionism became the leading, if contested, movement of Jewish nationalism after the war. Moreover, the influx of Eastern European immigration to Palestine enhanced the ubiquity of Hebrew in the Yishuv. Eastern European immigrants to Palestine—with the financial support of Western Jewish philanthropic organizations—established political and educational institutions geared toward the development of Hebrew as a spoken and written language. This sharpened the contrast between Zionist activity in Palestine and Western Europe, where Hebrew was nearly absent from Jewish life. For Western Jews witnessing the apparent formation of a Hebrew-speaking community in Palestine, Hebrew seemed more than ever as a “locked garden,” as a German rabbi put it in 1917.<sup>4</sup>

Studies of the approaches of German Jews to the “language question” in the interwar period emphasize their fascination with Jewish languages, intensified through the encounter with Eastern European Jews during the war and following their mass immigration westward.<sup>5</sup> Striving to discover Judaism and its literary repertoire, many German Jews saw Hebrew and Yiddish as embodying a certain Jewish authenticity. Buber and Rosenzweig appear in

such narratives as esteemed transmitters of Jewish culture. In what follows I shift the focus away from German Jews' emotional approaches to Hebrew. Instead, I explore the growing political pressure on German Jews to address their national and linguistic loyalties. This pressure was generated by effective agitation coming from Eastern European Zionists and was part of a broader current among European nationalist movements to advocate linguistic uniformity within a confined territory. At the same time, the pressure to know Hebrew reflected German Zionists' own sense of distance from the foundations of Judaism. The case of Buber and Rosenzweig offers a glimpse into how not knowing Hebrew became a political problem.

### Buber and Jewish Nationalism before the War

Buber's activity as a Zionist dates back to his years as a student in Leipzig, but it was his German versions of Hasidic tales (1906–1908) and frequent contributions to the German Zionist press that earned him a central position in the German Jewish public sphere. Inspired by the thought of Ahad Ha-Am, Buber believed that Zionists should invest more effort in cultivating Hebrew language and culture. He was supportive of the aspiration to settle in Palestine, but held that Zionism ought first to take place in the realm of individual experience, leading to a renewed sense of Jewish community. A nationally inclined Jew should reconstruct an inner sense of “Jewishness,” of rootedness in the Jewish past that generates in turn a future-oriented political vitality. A series of speeches that he gave in Prague between 1909 and 1910, which were published shortly afterward, consolidated his stature as a leading Jewish and Zionist thinker.<sup>6</sup> Buber was particularly influential among German Jewish youth, to whom he addressed some of his speeches and essays. His views were influenced by German neo-Romantic culture, emphasizing camaraderie, physical activity, curiosity, self-education, and spiritual growth.<sup>7</sup>

Buber's linguistic position within German Jewry was in some respects representative, in others exceptional. Though born in Vienna, he spent several years of his youth at his grandparents' home in Lemberg. His grandfather, Salomon Buber, was an observant, esteemed scholar of rabbinic Judaism who introduced his grandson to the Bible and to classic Hebrew texts. However, Buber was introduced from an early age to German culture and language, and he studied philosophy in Vienna, Zurich, Leipzig, and Berlin.<sup>8</sup> He was

also proficient in Yiddish, Polish, and French. Buber's proficiency in Hebrew was thorough, yet mostly textual.

While widely seen as a transmitter of Hebrew culture and a devoted adherent to its modern revival, Buber's Hebraism was constrained by his inability to participate in the Hebrew literary sphere.<sup>9</sup> In 1902, he initiated a volume of Ahad Ha-Am's essays translated into German and contacted Ahad Ha-Am to ask for his cooperation. Buber began his letter with an apology for the fact that he was writing the letter in German because "unfortunately this is the language which I still master the best."<sup>10</sup> Ahad Ha-Am replied in Hebrew, stating not without condescension that he inferred from the letter that "Hebrew is not foreign to you, even if you write more easily in German, so perhaps it would be your wish that I write to you not in the language of your letter, but in the language of our people."<sup>11</sup> As their correspondence over publication matters continued, Ahad Ha-Am wrote his letters in German.<sup>12</sup>

Buber thus encountered the symbolic superiority which Eastern European Zionists often enjoyed because of their better command of Hebrew.<sup>13</sup> In the 1909 Hebraist conference discussed in Chapter 4, Buber exclaimed that Hebrew was the "uniting form in the life of the people."<sup>14</sup> However, he gave the speech in German given his inability to convey his thoughts in Hebrew. His apologetic tone derived from the Hebraist assumption that Hebrew must be introduced into all realms of life as part of the realization of Jewish national hopes. Although Buber differed from the vast majority of modern German Jews given his knowledge of classical Hebrew, he was representative of it in terms of his attachment to German and creative dependence on it.

German Jews' engagement with Hebrew before the war was confined to small circles of activity, led mostly by Eastern European Jewish émigrés. Zionists promoted the study of Hebrew, yet its actual revival as a spoken or literary language within Germany was neither a realistic nor an urgent task.<sup>15</sup> Gershom Scholem, whose early Zionism was fiercer than most of his contemporaries, admitted that at first he studied Hebrew "without a sense that one day I would really know it."<sup>16</sup>

In his aforementioned 1909 speech, Buber admitted that in comparison with Jews in Palestine and Eastern Europe, Western Jews were not in a position to form a solid Hebrew "life community."<sup>17</sup> They could not acquire a



renewed Jewish “way of life,” in which language played a prominent role, but they could nonetheless acquire a “way of consciousness” (*Bewusstseinsform*). Buber also addressed the importance of “absorbing the Hebrew tongue into one’s life.” He left vague the extent and manner in which this ought to take place.<sup>18</sup> In a speech held in May 1914 at the student organization Bar Kochba in Prague, Buber proclaimed that studying Hebrew is an experience that, if pursued in earnest, makes one “more Jewish.”<sup>19</sup> It provides one with the ability to perceive oneself and one’s world differently: “In the Hebrew language our specific, primordial Jewish way [*urjüdisch*] of thinking has concentrated like in no other people nowadays.” Buber’s emphasis on the experiential aspect of learning Hebrew—without explicitly aiming at mastering it—differed from Eastern European Zionists’ emphasis on writing and speaking Hebrew as an essential element of Jewish national revival.

Buber’s views, then, allowed non-Hebrew speakers to see themselves as part of the national revival through the experience of pursuing Hebrew, however defined. To be sure, this was relevant not only to assimilated Western Jews but also to Eastern Europeans with poor or no knowledge of Hebrew.<sup>20</sup> However, Buber’s reliance on mystical and romantic vocabulary led some of his critics to picture him as conveying detached modes of thought.<sup>21</sup> After certain disagreements led him to leave the Association for the Hebrew Language in 1912, an article in a Vilna-based Hebrew periodical stated that Buber was filling a respectable role in German literature and may have written nice articles about Judaism, but “to be part of the Hebrew Association? What does he have to do with it?”<sup>22</sup> A fairly small segment within German Jewry, Zionists encouraged fellow German Jews to approach their ancestral tongue without any sense of urgency. The First World War, however, would change this state of affairs.

### Language Questions in the Great War

Notwithstanding important exceptions, German Jews during the first two years of the war generally supported the country’s war effort.<sup>23</sup> Buber was one of the main intellectuals associated with this support. In a letter to his Zionist friend (and future scholar of nationalism) Hans Kohn in September 1914 he wrote that he had never seen the term *Volk* come into life so powerfully as during those weeks, adding that a “sincere, great feeling” was



prevailing among Jews as well.<sup>24</sup> A major feature of the German political and intellectual justification of the war was the idea that Germany was carrying a civilizing mission in its combat and conquest. This idea fed on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century strands of German nationalist thought, ascribing to German nationhood a moral superiority that distinguishes it from exclusionary nationalist ideas.<sup>25</sup> Reflecting in the end of 1914 on the British claims concerning German war crimes, Simon Bernfeld noted that he lacked the knowledge to assess whether or not Germany had desired the war, but “there is one thing of which I am sure with mathematical certainty, that the nation which generated Schelling and Kant, Schiller and Goethe, who taught the highest ideals of cosmopolitanism, is not a nation of barbarians or of Huns which cherishes destruction and vicious annihilation.”<sup>26</sup> Buber, too, described the war as a necessary step conducted for a greater good. In 1915, he praised Germany’s “world-historical mission to bring together the civilizations of the East and the West.”<sup>27</sup>

Stefan Vogt has located Buber’s war enthusiasm within an existing current within German Zionism, according to which the war could create favorable political conditions for the Jewish national cause.<sup>28</sup> Germany’s conquest of Poland in 1915 seemed an opportunity to release Jews from the yoke of reactionary tsarist policies, to grant Jews equal rights, and to raise their cultural and civic condition. A group called Committee for the East (*Komitee für den Osten*), comprising several Jewish activists including German Zionists, advocated for cooperation with the Central Powers in Eastern Europe.<sup>29</sup>

The language question played a central role in their cause. According to the agenda promoted by some German Zionists, the proximity of Yiddish to German could help make Jews serve as transmitters of German culture and administration in their interaction with other parts of the population. It would also enable these Jews to acquire German culture more swiftly than other national minorities.<sup>30</sup> In a 1916 booklet, Zionist activist Nahum Goldmann described Eastern European Jews as “mediators of world culture” through their “German-Jewish language.”<sup>31</sup> Another activist, Davis Trietsch, published in 1915 a pamphlet that laid out the interests and cultural-linguistic traits that Germans and Eastern European Jews had in common.<sup>32</sup> Zionists thus mobilized German conceptions of language and nationhood to demonstrate the historical relation of Jews to the German language. Such efforts

did not yield any results, and the activity of the committee was received with indifference or hostility by both the German government and Eastern European Jewish populations. The military losses Germany suffered in 1916 made ideas of strategic alliance even less relevant.

The war also strengthened antisemitic and ethnocentric currents in German society. This tendency culminated in the 1916 military initiative to count the number of Jewish soldiers serving in the German army, thus assessing whether Jews were evading military service—a baseless accusation that was propagated widely as the war progressed. The results of the census were not made public, yet reports of its conduct circulated, causing an uproar among German Jews.<sup>33</sup> Amid growing political hostility, German Jews defined and affirmed their Jewishness in various ways. The encounter of German Jews with Eastern European Jews—whether on the Eastern Front or facing Jewish immigration to the West—also enhanced Jews' engagement with questions of cultural difference and self-identification.<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps the most transformative consequence of the Great War was the widening consensus in European diplomacy and civil societies around the principle of national self-determination predicated on linguistic-territorial categories, as expressed in the 1919 peace treaties.<sup>35</sup> While a Jewish state was not part of the new international order, the entry of the British Army into Palestine and the 1917 Balfour Declaration, acknowledging Jews' right for a "national home" in Palestine, gave the Zionist cause unprecedented momentum. Moreover, it was London that became the center of Zionist diplomacy.<sup>36</sup> These developments restructured the Jewish linguistic order, thwarted the German-language dominance of Zionist politics, and threw the question of Jewish multilingualism into sharp relief.<sup>37</sup> For German Jews, it added a pressing dimension concerning their approach to Hebrew.

### The Pressure to Know Hebrew

The question of Jewish linguistic difference is an old trope in Jewish history, but it gained new meanings in the era of nationalist agitation. In Prague, where most Jews spoke German, both Czech and German nationalists often saw Jews' multilingualism as a sign of their national disloyalty.<sup>38</sup> In demographically mixed areas, Jews who maintained their German language (even as a second language) could be perceived by members of other ethnic groups

as adhering to the Empire and to German culture. In 1918, Prague-based Jewish writer Max Brod published an essay in which he asserted that his rootedness in German culture and language did not contradict his national sentiments as a Zionist nor his affection for Czech culture.<sup>39</sup>

Brod's position was also a response to criticism from within the Jewish national sphere regarding German Jews' putatively abstract commitment to the Jewish national imperative. According to this criticism, Central European nationalist Jews may present themselves as part of the Jewish historical chain, but their Judaism lacks any concreteness. This criticism was predicated on the assumption that the present era required devoted action, and not only gestures of support. In this respect, not knowing Hebrew had symbolic but also political implications. The Zionist Congress, a German-dominated venue of Jewish politics, evinced in the interwar period more vocal resentment against non-Hebrew speakers. In a speech given in German in the 1921 congress, Revisionist Zionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky asserted that he had intended not to say "a single word" in a language other than Hebrew, adding, "We will pay a heavy price for the fact that this congress is linguistically foreign and hence acquires foreign characteristics." Jabotinsky explained that it was only because he was seeking to "attack" certain participants who do not speak Hebrew that he turned to German. He expressed the hope that "this would be the last time."<sup>40</sup> Jabotinsky's aspiration, however, had yet to materialize. The interwar congress protocols attested to a continuously multilingual practice, albeit the transcripts no longer sidelined any linguistic group. All speeches and discussions were translated into German. A reporter for the Hebrew periodical *Ha-Tyfra* wrote during the 1927 congress that despite the fact that Hebrew, Yiddish, and English were accepted languages of speech, "German remained the true 'owner' of the congress."<sup>41</sup> In the 1929 congress, one of the participants said he would prefer to speak in Hebrew, "but the majority of the congress doesn't understand it," hence continuing in German.<sup>42</sup>

The tension between Hebrew and German was also entangled with the symbolic divide between Palestine and the West. While the Jewish population in interwar Palestine was fairly poor and small, it gained ideological significance given the steady immigration from Eastern Europe and the advancement of the Yishuv's social and political infrastructure. In 1920, the British Mandate in Palestine recognized Hebrew as one of the official

languages of the land. The growth of Hebrew educational systems also enhanced the spread of Hebrew, even if in practice the Yishuv continued to be a thoroughly multilingual society.<sup>43</sup> Amid these developments, the vernacularization of Hebrew acquired a central role in Zionist discourse. This created a dissonance among Western Jews who advocated for Jewish self-determination while being unable to exercise one of its main sources of legitimacy. Facing exclusionary currents within German nationalism on the one hand and Hebrew-centered Jewish nationalism on the other, German Jewish nationalists were pressed to prove their loyalty and belonging.

A major platform in which German Jews tackled language questions was *Der Jude*, a widely circulated monthly journal Martin Buber founded in 1916. Yehezkiel Kaufmann, a Hebrew scholar who grew up in Byelorussia and studied in Bern during the war, published in 1916 an essay on the Hebrew language and its national import. He analyzed the present condition, as a "language shift" was taking place in Eastern Europe, whereby Jews were abandoning Yiddish in favor of the state language.<sup>44</sup> Jewish nationalists, he believed, must seize the opportunity to reaffirm the presence of Hebrew as a national language and as a *Kultursprache* alongside the state language. While Eastern European Jews were better equipped to revive Hebrew, the linguistic transformation should apply to all diaspora Jews. Kaufmann envisioned a state of affairs in which not only Jews in Palestine but also those outside of it would contribute their share to the revival of Hebrew.

A similar call by a Zionist activist in Palestine appeared in 1919, encouraging diaspora Jews to participate actively in the attempts to make Hebrew a "Volkssprache."<sup>45</sup> Another article from Palestine, by Yitzhak Epstein, described the revival of Hebrew in terms of a slow recovery from two thousand years of "collective amnesia."<sup>46</sup> In 1918, *Der Jude* published two articles written by Eliezer Meir Lipschütz (1879–1946), a Galician Hebrew scholar who settled in Jerusalem in 1909, taught at the Hilfsverein's Teachers Seminary, and was a member of the Language Committee. During the war he settled in Berlin and stayed there until 1921.<sup>47</sup> Lipschütz offered an overview of why and how Hebrew had maintained its status as an "inner language" (a term he borrowed from Humboldt) even when it had not been used as a vernacular.<sup>48</sup> In this way he emphasized the spiritual continuity between ancient and modern Hebrew. Lipschütz gave a detailed account of the linguistic situation

in Palestine, describing how national sentiments had fused successfully with Hebraist initiatives until it “had become here a genuine spoken language.”<sup>49</sup> He depicted vividly the “strong and delightful impression” that awaits the “national pilgrim to Palestine,” who upon arriving in Jaffa encounters “small children playing and fighting in Hebrew, the swell of people walking in the afternoon, from which one hears time and again the sounds of Hebrew.”<sup>50</sup>

Lipschütz discussed some of the challenges the Jewish community in Palestine was facing, but his overall narrative was triumphant, celebrating Hebrew’s “liveliness.” He stressed the pioneering role of Eastern European Hebraists—both within the Haskalah and in the national era—in leading the Hebrew language to its accomplished status in the present. When discussing the place of Hebrew in the diaspora, Lipschütz invoked Jewish scholars who were well familiar with the Hebrew ancient sources as well as with modern concepts, “yet lack the linguistic sensibility for modern Hebrew and are therefore unable to express themselves in it.” Given their minimal participation in the effort to modernize Hebrew, their language “sounds foreign.”<sup>51</sup> In a 1919 article published in the Viennese journal *Esra*, Lipschütz wrote of German Zionists’ efforts to acquire Hebrew as leading to nothing but despair.<sup>52</sup> By emphasizing the realization of national ideals in Palestine as opposed to the situation in the West, the German Jewish reader was alerted to the widening gap between Jews who have endorsed Hebrew, and those remaining behind.

In another article, Lipschütz bemoaned German Jewry’s spiritual decline in the modern period: “What the fathers had achieved, their children were no longer able to possess. They alienated themselves from Hebrew, it turned foreign to them.”<sup>53</sup> Without a more determined return to the Bible and to Hebrew education, Judaism in Germany might be doomed: “German Jews will lose any relation to world Judaism, any impact on Jewish politics, on the events in Palestine.” He added that it is also in the interest of German Jews to change their ways, because “German will no longer serve as a language in which Jews are able to communicate with each other.”<sup>54</sup> Lipschütz discussed liberal and orthodox approaches to Hebrew, and also addressed the activity of Zionists in Germany, who, unlike the former two groups, “have the will for Hebrew,” yet lack the “valid, legitimate form of the Jewish spirit and life, the Hebrew language.”<sup>55</sup>

Despite criticizing German Jews, Lipschütz, similarly to Kaufmann, presented them as products of broader historical processes they were unable to withstand. A more direct criticism of Jewish diasporic life and its linguistic habits came from Jakob Klatzkin (1882–1948). The son of an orthodox rabbi from Belorussia, Klatzkin was schooled at a Lithuanian Yeshiva and later moved to Marburg, where he studied with the German Jewish philosopher Hermann Cohen. Both for his intellectual and for his journalistic work during and after the war, Klatzkin was a widely read and highly controversial Jewish thinker.<sup>56</sup> He published numerous philosophical pieces and translated Spinoza's *Ethics* into Hebrew. Additionally, Klatzkin composed a comprehensive Hebrew lexicon of philosophical concepts and coedited the German-language *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.<sup>57</sup>

According to Klatzkin, in the modern period Judaism had undergone a process of degeneration, a loss of any trace of liveliness and meaning. He saw this as part of the overall advent of reason and decline of religion. This process undermined the ability to reach the authenticity and vitality that the primordial forces of religious experience had fostered. This phenomenon culminated in the Jewish context with the Jewish enlighteners, who tried to mold Judaism in a manner that would render it congruous with the life of reason. This, however, was an impossible task in the diaspora, for a religion-less Judaism was bound to assimilate into other cultures and peoples within which it existed. To reinvent itself, Judaism had to undergo a radical transformation whereby Zionist ideology would be embraced in full. For Klatzkin, Judaism needed a profound process of normalization, namely doing away with the notion of chosenness, as well as with the idea that it was carrying a universal ethical core. Instead, efforts should be dedicated to obtaining the sole criteria that make for a nation: territory and language. Only once such conditions are fulfilled could a Jewish nation strive to a meaningful and viable existence.<sup>58</sup>

In 1918, Klatzkin published a philosophical and political analysis of the situation of Jewish nationhood, *The Problems of Modern Judaism*.<sup>59</sup> The book drew much interest among German Jews, was republished in expanded versions in 1921 and 1930, and appeared in Yiddish in 1929. For Klatzkin, modern Jews' attempt to perceive of Judaism as grounded on a universal moral code was a manipulation of its original nature, namely a law-based religion. The universal elements of Judaism, in particular those embodied in the prophetic

tradition, were not related to its national content.<sup>60</sup> For Klatzkin, the national turn in Judaism was a process of a radical break with the religious past. Given that religion had been in general decline, national Jews ought to acknowledge this process and to take the necessary measures. He advocated complete secularization, at the heart of which lay Jews' striving for a land and language of their own. Palestine and the Hebrew language were therefore both an ideological and a practical prerequisite for Jewish nationhood: "In a foreign land and a foreign tongue our existence is never national. Even if we follow Jewish moral codes."<sup>61</sup> With regard to language, Klatzkin's criticism was even more vehement: "It is shameful to be Jewish without understanding Hebrew. Are there other peoples who are so shamefully unaspiring? What other people uses such a low criterion to determine one's belonging?"<sup>62</sup>

Klatzkin's categorical distinction between Jewish form (language, territory) and content (ethical codes) left Western Jews entirely out of what could be considered a national community: "A Jewish form can never become Jewish through Jewish content."<sup>63</sup> He also placed German Jews at an inferior position as compared with that of Yiddish-speaking Jews. In Klatzkin's view, Yiddish had a positive, if transitory, function in Jewish nationalism, as it helped maintain the Hebrew alphabet and vocabulary.<sup>64</sup> For this reason, Klatzkin believed that Yiddishists and Hebraists should cooperate in their opposition to Jews' linguistic assimilation. Like Lipschütz, Klatzkin justified the emphasis on Hebrew for Jewish national revival on its being a foundational language, the absolute national form, a remnant of a lively, authentic, Jewish collective spirit.

Klatzkin's elevation of Hebrew as a national language went hand in hand with a gloomier view of its present status. In the introduction to his 1923 translation of Spinoza's *Ethics*, he argued that while Spinoza was not particularly influenced by medieval Hebrew philosophy, the Hebrew tongue shaped directly his thought.<sup>65</sup> Klatzkin held that some of Spinoza's terms could be properly understood only by reference to their equivalent in ancient and medieval Hebrew: "It is ancient Hebrew's virtue that is suited to this work in several manners and is particularly apt for the task of its translation, without the necessity of going beyond the confines of language."<sup>66</sup> In the glossary, Klatzkin expressed his hope that in his future lexicon of Hebrew philosophical concepts—which was based on the notes for Spinoza's translation—he

would explore how “the Hebrew terminology needs to be retrieved from the confines of the Middle Ages and the revival period so as to integrate it into the philosophical thought of our generation.”<sup>67</sup>

Klatzkin thus distinguished between Hebrew's position in ancient and medieval Judaism on the one hand and its rather backward position in the modern, national era on the other hand. In the introduction to his Hebrew lexicon, published in 1928, Klatzkin wrote that its goal was to allow readers easier access to Hebrew medieval philosophy but also to help expand Hebrew, “which is very poor in scholarly realms.”<sup>68</sup> Hebrew's deficiency was particularly apparent to Klatzkin when compared to German's wealth as a language of philosophy and science. In an autobiographical note, Klatzkin commented on the creative process of Hebrew writing with a similar approach: “When writing a true piece, the Hebrew writer must be a twofold artist: an artist in his creation and an artist in its translation (the Jewish-Hebrew Mendele). I am not able to write my philosophical work in Hebrew unless I conceive it first in German—either by writing or by thinking in German—and [then] create-translate into Hebrew.”<sup>69</sup>

While contributing to modern Hebrew's return to scholarly writing, Klatzkin was unequivocal about how this task involved confronting the historical gap between the Jewish past and future. Addressing the weakness of modern Hebrew in scholarly realms, and seeking to overcome Jewish philosophers' reliance on foreign terms, the normalization of Hebrew would also reduce its dependence on foreign linguistic resources. At the same time, Klatzkin admitted that the Hebraization process forced Hebrew authors to cope with genuine linguistic difficulties. A common thread of his writing concerned demarcating lines between different national cultures, as well as between ancient and modern Jewish history. In both realms, Western Jews lacked access to the “form” of Judaism, finding themselves barred from a genuine Jewish national life.

Klatzkin lived in Berlin and was intimately acquainted with German Jewish intellectual life. In this respect, he differed from a group of Hebrew writers living in Germany during these years, most prominent among them Sh. Y. Agnon, Berdyczewski, and Bialik (arriving in 1921). Eastern European Hebraists, as well as a parallel circle of Yiddishists in Berlin, arrived mostly during the war and after the Russian Revolution. Among the movement of



Eastern European Jews to Berlin—often only as a sojourn—were also Hebrew and Yiddish writers who turned the city into a hub of Jewish literary production, situated in coffee shops, private apartments, and publishing houses.<sup>70</sup> Their presence did not remain unnoticed among German Jews. Scholars such as Buber and Rosenzweig engaged with Hebrew and Yiddish literature and maintained contacts with some of the writers.<sup>71</sup>

In the case of Bialik, his stature as the leading “national poet” was widely held, and German translations of his poems appeared regularly in Jewish periodicals. In 1919, a short version of Bialik’s 1913 essay “The Hebrew Book” appeared in *Neue jüdische Monatshefte*, presenting to the German reader the call for a modern project of a Hebrew literary canon.<sup>72</sup> Although some of the more aggressive, anti-German statements were omitted, the text entailed a call for the Hebraization of the study of Judaism. It also included the unequivocal statement that “the Jewish people’s not speaking Hebrew is one of our gravest national sins, which could partially be atoned only through a *reincarnation*.”<sup>73</sup> As the piece was published in German, the readers were virtually charged of being complicit in the “national sin.”

In 1924, *Der Jude* published a German translation of a Hebrew essay Bialik had published a year earlier on the occasion of launching *Dvir*, a Hebrew scholarly journal based in Berlin.<sup>74</sup> There, Bialik sharpened his critique of the German Jewish scholarly tradition, decrying the “immense sin Western Jewry and its leaders have committed for nearly three generations against one of the pillars of the Israelite nation—the Hebrew tongue.”<sup>75</sup> He reiterated some of the accusations he made in his 1913 speech, describing Zunz and Geiger as “Germanizing the Hebrew spirit and transforming it from within.” This process, Bialik exclaimed, led to the present situation whereby “Western Jewry lies like a corpse in front of us.” For him, the Jewish studies enterprise “has ultimately retreated from the tongue of Israel, dwindled and ceased to exist.”<sup>76</sup>

Bialik contrasted Western Jewry’s decline with the rise of Eastern European Hebrew literature, which infused Judaism with renewed powers. This process had come to a halt with the cataclysmic events of the war, destroying Jewish communities, sending their inhabitants westwards, and leading to an encounter between them and their Western brethren. Offering an optimistic note on the potential outcome of this course of events, Bialik expressed his

hope for mutual influence and rapprochement. This conveyed Bialik's subtle appreciation of the Jewish Western European intellectual and cultural level. He encouraged the exchange between West and East and celebrated the fact that the first Hebrew journal was published in Berlin ("is that not a sign of the times?").<sup>77</sup> That said, Bialik emphasized the superior position of Hebrew that must define the future awaiting the Jewish nation. His optimistic vision was then conditioned on overcoming the habit of expressing one's Judaism in a foreign language.

Hebraists based their championing of Hebrew largely on the distinction between Hebrew and non-Hebrew. In line with the prevalent tendency in European politics to demarcate national boundaries—both territorial and cultural—writers such as Klatzkin, Lipschütz, and Bialik singled out the question of Jewish languages in the West, particularly in Germany. While partaking in a "Jewish Renaissance," German Jews were taken to task for their inability to meet the Hebraist criteria.

### German Jews and the Hebrew Pressure

The pressure to know Hebrew was not solely external. An examination of wartime Jewish periodicals shows how German Jews addressed with growing urgency the imperative to acquire Hebrew. In the volumes of *Blau-Weiß Blätter*, the newspaper of the largest German Jewish youth movement, the problem of not knowing Hebrew appeared steadily during the war years. In February 1916, an article titled "How to Learn Hebrew" addressed the challenges young German Jews were facing amid the realization that "Hebrew is much harder than expected." The author of the article recommended studying Hebrew in small groups in order to monitor and support each other, and encouraged the readers not to cease their efforts. He juxtaposed the situation of German Jews to that of Palestine's Jews: "For the blossoming of the Jewish people, the Jewish youth in Erets Israel, the Hebrew language is not dead any longer; they speak, sing, and play in it. To make it live also among us shall be our goal and will."<sup>78</sup>

The author also offered tips on how to use *Sfat Amenu*, a Hebrew textbook written by Moses Rath and published in Vienna in 1914. It became a best seller during the war, "the only Hebrew textbook that we German Jews currently possess," as noted in an article marking the publication of the

book's second edition in 1917.<sup>79</sup> *Sfat Amenu* continued to be the main reference book for German speakers studying Hebrew (Franz Kafka also learned Hebrew using this book and sent a copy to a Jewish friend from Budapest).<sup>80</sup>

In an article published in *Der jüdische Student*, the journal of the umbrella organization of German Jewish youth movements, a soldier based in Belorussia wrote with excitement about his encounter with Eastern European Jews. He laid out the necessary steps Zionists should take, exclaiming: "Hebrew, Hebrew, and once again Hebrew!" Only then, the author predicted, would "our Judaism become more self-evident, the lack of satisfaction, the doubt regarding the properness of our Judaism, would vanish, which is ultimately the reason why we perceive our Judaism as insufficiently intrinsic."<sup>81</sup> Another determined call to learn Hebrew came from Zionist leader Kurt Blumenfeld, who held that German Zionists must dedicate themselves to reading the Bible ("like a German reads Faust") and learning Hebrew: "*Hebrew must be learned incessantly in courses and privately! Genuine learning creates intrinsic nationalism.*"<sup>82</sup>

In June 1916, Kurt Rosenthal, a Jewish soldier on the front, called on his fellow Zionists to fulfill the major condition necessary for settling in Palestine: learning Hebrew. "Now that many of us have an awful lot of time to spare," learning Hebrew was the right way to use that time. He praised Rath's book: "I'm already in section 30, and it seems splendid. The learning is fun." Rosenthal recommended passing the book between learners and engaging in Hebrew correspondence, and concluded: "Hebrew is the alpha and omega of every Palestinism." Zionists at the front should therefore use their time to promote the movement's goals.<sup>83</sup>

Other German Zionists were less enthusiastic. Gustav Witkowski, writing from the front, started to learn Hebrew during the war and made some progress, although he was doubtful as to whether it could transform in any real sense his inner being. For him, the Hebrew journalist Nahum Sokolow was not more "autochthonously Jewish" than the writings of the German Jewish journalist Maximilian Harden. He also asked Zionist "romanticists" whether Hebrew, in its present state, "is suited to express European thought to a degree that is at least equal to other cultural languages." He also shared the "horror" he experienced when "moving from Rath to the Pentateuch," reckoning that he was facing an entirely different language.<sup>84</sup> Witkowski's

experience with modern Hebrew led him then to question the relation between the ideal and reality of learning Hebrew.

In other volumes of *Der jüdische Student*, the Hebrew question was part of a debate over the reconciliation between German and Jewish self-understanding.<sup>85</sup> Zionist activist Siegfried Weitzman argued that German Jewish writers such as Karl Kraus and Else Lasker-Schüler convey something profoundly Jewish and “un-German” in their writing. Lasker-Schüler “writes Hebrew ballads . . . born out of genuine love for the Biblical world.” Weitzmann advocated immersion in Jewish culture while questioning the acuteness of the need to learn Hebrew: “The German classics can also be taken to Palestine,” therefore one should not equate sweepingly one’s state of mind with the actions taken to realize Zionist goals.<sup>86</sup> While praising the work toward immigration to Palestine and acquisition of Hebrew, he challenged the idea that practical criteria were the only way to evaluate the Jewish national revival. A soldier writing from the front raised a similar argument: “It is possible to have perfect historical knowledge, to speak Hebrew, to live in Palestine, and still not to have the proper ‘Jewishness.’”<sup>87</sup> Another article published by Kurt Blumenfeld asserted that knowing Hebrew alone does not determine one’s sense of Jewishness. He gave as an example German Jews of earlier generations who knew Hebrew very well yet could be considered as “destroyers of Judaism.”<sup>88</sup> Blumenfeld objected to the idea that the goal of German Jews was to follow merely the achievements of Palestine’s Jews. Diaspora Jews’ striving to Zion, he added, had always been of major significance for the persistence of Judaism, and this continued to hold true in the present.

Another section of German Zionism endorsed firmly the Hebrew pressure. In 1917, Gershom Scholem criticized *Blau-Weiß* members for being overly rooted in German culture: “Judaism is a foreign plant in *Blau-Weiß*.” The yearning of German Jewish youth for Judaism, as expressed in an essay to which Scholem responded, was hollow. Despite the consensus on the essential role of Hebrew for “nationalizing the youth,” in reality their study of Hebrew was scarce and often discontinued early.<sup>89</sup> If young German Jews had taken Hebrew in earnest, he wrote, they would have learned it zealously. In practice, Scholem argued, pursuing Hebrew among German Zionists reflected a national-cultural inclination and not a matter of absolute

importance. German Jews should endorse Hebrew in its totality, as the language of the Torah and of Judaism, until it transformed their spiritual-national mind-set. Their goal should not be to say a few words but “to be able to be silent in Hebrew.”

The end of the war rendered the Hebraist imperative ever more present, fueled by the discourse of national self-determination. Hugo Bergmann, a leading Zionist activist in Prague and a close friend of Buber’s, asserted in 1919 that Hebrew illiteracy among the first generation of German Zionists could be forgiven, but “this cannot apply to us anymore.” He conceded that there were more urgent matters for Zionists, yet it was cardinal, he wrote, “to enter into the hall of Judaism, not to stand outside while shouting that we are inside of it.”<sup>90</sup> In the same year, Bergmann published in *Der Jude* a pessimistic account of German Jews’ slow acquisition of Hebrew. It derived, in his view, from their reluctance to step outside of the German language and literature. Depicting a “deep abyss” that separated the consciousness of the Central European Jew from Hebrew literature, he decried the fact that the “leap” from German to Hebrew in Jewish literature was failing to materialize: “Our young, gifted, admirable German Zionists prefer to write in German—studies about Judaism, propositions for education in Erets Israel, poetry. . . . The German word blocks their thought’s way to Erets Israel, the way to actuality.”<sup>91</sup>

In *Jerubbaal*, a Viennese journal published in 1918–1919 to which Buber, Bergmann, and Scholem contributed, the question of Hebrew surfaced frequently.<sup>92</sup> One column addressed the lack of Hebrew textbooks suitable for the times and proclivities of the Western Jew, as opposed to those written for Eastern European Jews.<sup>93</sup> Several texts questioned the historical significance of Hebrew for the Jewish revival, emphasizing instead “a common instinct,” or describing Hebrew as a “spirit” that continued to operate even in foreign tongues.<sup>94</sup> Similar to the war debates, certain articles addressed the auxiliary role of learning Hebrew amid the broader goal of transforming the inner self.<sup>95</sup> Haim Arlozorov—who came from Ukraine to Germany as a child and who would later become a leading politician in the Yishuv—asserted that “for us, Hebrew is not an end in itself.” Learning to speak it was of secondary importance: “Kindergarteners learn it within six months in Palestine. We don’t need it in order to be able to speak with Jews from the Caucasus

Mountains." For Arlozorov, Hebrew primarily functioned as "a key to the gate which is locked sevenfold to us, the gate to Jewish culture."<sup>96</sup>

Hebrew, then, had a symbolic yet substantial place in Zionist debates during the war and in its immediate aftermath. While the general value of learning Hebrew was beyond dispute, its actual significance and urgency were perceived in various ways. The differences depended on biographical background, broader ideological worldviews, and degrees of attachment to German culture, but also, latently, on one's linguistic skills and difficulties involved in learning Hebrew. A common premise, however, was German Jews' historical and spiritual distance from spoken Hebrew. This issue became ever more pressing in the face of the often-idealized image they had of Palestine and the role of Hebrew there. Some writers addressed the problem by deeming it inferior to other issues, whereas others encouraged a more proactive approach. In the Zionist debates, Hebrew meant different things: it was a language of religious ritual, a vernacular, and the basis of a national claim. However understood, the issue of not knowing Hebrew could no longer be ignored.

### Buber's Hebrew

Buber's position on the Hebrew pressure was ambivalent: On the one hand, he propagated the "return" to Hebrew, emphasizing its indispensability to the "Jewish Renaissance." As the editor of *Der Jude*, he also helped disseminate the Hebraist pressure. On the other hand, his rootedness in German made him part of the status quo which the Hebrew pressure sought to change.<sup>97</sup> In this respect, his intellectual development during the war years is of particular relevance. According to Paul Mendes-Flohr, the spring of 1916 was a turning point in Buber's thought, evincing a retreat from mystical tendencies, laying emphasis instead on the intersubjective, dialogical element of social and religious experience. His war enthusiasm gave way to a more withdrawn and critical approach to it. In a 1919 edition of his earlier essays, Buber noted: "At the end of the first speech, passages were deleted in which the German nation is called upon to lead the return and to establish a new era of concord with the Orient. The German nation did not assume the function referred to in these passages and is now no longer capable of doing so."<sup>98</sup> Within the Jewish political sphere, Buber had to defend his position against two

main ideological challenges: German Jewish liberalism and Eastern European Zionism.

The most prominent intellectual among Jewish liberals was Hermann Cohen, with whom Buber had a programmatic debate during the war. Cohen published several essays in which he rebuked the Zionist cause for going against the spiritual vocation of Judaism as an apolitical religion of reason. In a 1916 essay titled "Zionism and Religion," Cohen argued that Hebrew's status in Judaism was being jeopardized by the secularizing drive of Zionism.<sup>99</sup> Hebrew, Cohen stated, "is facing dangers and a curse." For German Jews, he claimed, Hebrew is first and foremost a holy tongue. However, holiness is not inherent to Hebrew, but emanates from its function as a language that transmits holiness. Cohen pointed out that the Hebrew term is *leshon kodesh*—language of holiness—and not "holy language," *heilige Sprache*, as the German translation has it.<sup>100</sup> For Cohen, the German Jew should know Hebrew prayers so as to experience the "poetic power of the original language" and to make them part of the "deepest treasures of his soul."<sup>101</sup>

In a response published in *Der Jude*, Buber argued that Cohen's understanding of Judaism and Hebrew was bereft of any historicity.<sup>102</sup> Hebrew's role pertains not merely to Judaism's natural condition, but to its historical realization. For diaspora Jews, Buber emphasized, "Hebrew in the diaspora is not primarily an everyday language but above all the language of the great historical linkage, of the entire, unified nationhood . . . to which prayers belong, but only as one part of this great book."<sup>103</sup> What is more, by turning to Hebrew, the Jewish youth finds a path to its historical texts and origins, thereby reinforcing its Jewish spirit.

Buber's approach to Hebrew also evolved in response to Eastern European Zionist criticism, which forced Buber into a more defensive position. In a speech he gave to a youth movement in 1917, Buber described the revival of spoken Hebrew—"Hebrew of family life, of the kitchen, of the market, of the street"—as "the most beautiful phenomenon in the Jewish life in Palestine." However, "when it comes to our Western Jewish education, this has to do with something else, [namely] those Jewish values that could only be transmitted in the Hebrew language to revive the youth."<sup>104</sup> Buber here relegated the imperative of speaking Hebrew to a secondary goal, amid the more urgent task of reviving Jewish values. By doing so, Buber offered a way

for the youth not to be dismayed by Hebrew's rise in Palestine and by their not partaking in it. In another article, Buber wrote that Hebrew should be part of the program of Jewish schools, "but not in order to enable the young person to have a conversation with his friends when he comes to Palestine as a tourist or otherwise." That goal should not be conflated with the fundamental imperative of learning Hebrew as the language that encapsulates Jewish values.<sup>105</sup>

In *Jerubbaal*, Buber further pursued this line. He published a fictitious dialogue between a Zionist teacher and his student on how to "live Jewish." The student shared his wish to learn Hebrew but also his inability to make it an inherent part of his being. The teacher said, "Did you not feel while studying that you were here but the language elsewhere, you at the present and the language in times immemorial, so that you must assume, and accept and come to terms with it, because it is the language of your ancestry?" The student, confirming this sensation, is then encouraged "to engage with the language as if you created it . . . as if you brought those words, sentences, and verses out of your innermost self."<sup>106</sup> The teacher asked him to strive to "feel like the originator of this language while studying it."<sup>107</sup> Buber presented, then, studying Hebrew—not speaking it—as what prompts the spiritual transformation young Zionists must seek.

Buber shared his own position on Hebrew in a 1919 correspondence with Hugo Bergmann. Responding to Bergmann's contention that moving away from German was essential for both ideological and practical reasons, Buber wrote: "As highly as I esteem the value of the language for our life, it is not all that central to me. Everything depends . . . not on whether there will be a Hebrew word, but whether there will be *any word* at all."<sup>108</sup> Buber thus questioned the importance of knowing Hebrew as such, underscoring the engagement with content and experience. He downplayed the intrinsic value of learning Hebrew despite having propagated this very dimension in earlier texts, particularly in his 1916 debate with Cohen.

Bergmann insisted that adopting Hebrew mattered at present more than ever. He equated Buber's approach with the "remote and alien" position of "official Zionism," and argued, "Just because I know that the whole hope of Zionism throughout the world today rests upon the generation whom you have educated, just for that very reason I may see more clearly than you the



tremendous peril that—because of its remoteness from the people and its language—the entire movement remains what it has hitherto been: a literary movement.”<sup>109</sup> Bergmann shared with Buber his own feeling regarding the difficulty of adopting Hebrew, stating, “I know how hard it is; with every Hebrew line I write, I am inclined to weep at the inadequacy of word and thought which is the consequence of my *am haartzut* [in unidiomatic Hebrew: ignorance].” Bergmann insisted that “if we are not going to throw ourselves completely into the problems, into the intellectual life of Hebrew literature, then the future course of things (whatever it may be) will simply pass over us as stragglers, as those who lagged behind halfway along the road, as old men.”

After rejecting Bergmann’s arguments as “radical Hebraism,” Buber eventually conceded that his oscillation between different ways of pursuing Hebrew could not be reconciled: “I must acknowledge that what you wrote to me about our position toward Hebraism is correct.” Yet after setting aside the ideological matter, Buber turned to the personal struggle involved in pursuing Hebrew: “I am once again doing a good deal of Hebrew and think that in a year or two I shall probably be able to speak freely in the language. But I doubt whether I will ever reach the point of being able to express myself *creatively* in it—or rather, I don’t believe I will. . . . Certainly no greater joy could come my way than to be freed of this unbelief.”<sup>110</sup> Buber was involved in the plans to establish a university in Jerusalem, and he intended to move to Jerusalem and teach there. Concerns as to whether he could teach and write in modern Hebrew recurred in his correspondence. In January 1919, he wrote that he was hoping to be able “to express ideas independently thought” in Hebrew within five years, but he was doubtful he could reach it earlier.<sup>111</sup> In 1924, he confessed to Scholem that his conversational Hebrew “is still extremely insecure—or rather, it is scarcely ‘conversational’ at all as yet.”<sup>112</sup> As Bergmann’s and Scholem’s efforts to find a position for Buber at the university—which was opened in 1925—were under way, Buber confirmed to Scholem that his difficulty with Hebrew lay at the heart of his not arriving: “I believe I have a right to say that I ‘know’ Hebrew, but as soon as I want to express a thought, it crumbles in my mouth.”<sup>113</sup>

Not being able to speak Hebrew was therefore an underlying feature of Buber’s engagement with Jewish politics and culture. It signified the dif-

ficulty of carrying out the spiritual and linguistic renaissance he had been propagating. In this respect, Buber's emphasis on reading the Bible served a strategic role in the imperative of learning Hebrew. By locating the religious and national status of the Bible at the heart of Judaism, and by emphasizing the spiritual effect of learning Hebrew, Buber partly neutralized the Hebraist demand to adopt Hebrew in full.

Buber's case offers a nuanced look into categories of "knowing" and "not knowing" Hebrew during the first decades of the century.<sup>114</sup> The national demand for monolingualism, as Jacques Derrida argued, has a deceiving quality to it, because "there is no natural property of language, language gives rise only to appropriative madness, to jealousy without appropriation."<sup>115</sup> In other words, the monolingual demand cannot be truly fulfilled.<sup>116</sup> Derrida's insight seems particularly pertinent to the case of modern Hebrew in the early twentieth century. As a language that had been confined to specific functions over centuries, its limited capacities rendered full "Hebraization" an impossible imperative. This had been all the more problematic for most German Jews, who lacked traditional Jewish training, were not accustomed to Hebrew letters, and were remote from the emerging Hebrew-speaking community in Palestine.

The sources discussed here demonstrate that it is necessary to separate between the different dimensions of the imperative to know Hebrew—as a vernacular, as a language of religious ritual, and as a source of political legitimacy. In his discussion of the engagement of Scholem, Benjamin, and Kafka with Hebrew, literary scholar Robert Alter focuses mainly on the generational divide between middle-class, acculturated Germans and their children.<sup>117</sup> The latter associated Hebrew with realms of spirituality and authenticity, oppressed through their parents' assimilationist immersion in German culture. Alter preferred not to dwell on "the obvious fact that Hebrew was the instrument of political Zionism as a nationalist revival," focusing instead on the idea that Jewish writing in foreign languages is inevitably steeped with an apologetic posture which could only be avoided by using a Jewish language.<sup>118</sup> However, we miss part of the picture by overlooking the concrete political world in which German Jews were operating and against which their Jewishness had to be formulated.

Barbara Schäfer has described Buber as someone who was "trapped" in the German language: "Buber was orphaned. His own language had got lost

by history and fate and by the same history and fate German had become a haven, though not his mother tongue.”<sup>119</sup> However, German Jews’ approach to Hebrew should be seen not merely as a subjective quest for at-homeness in language but also as a political matter, a struggle for self-legitimization constantly challenged and shaped by competing views of Jewishness. Studying the matter of (not-)knowing Hebrew requires us to take into account the difference between ideological horizons and concrete, realizable goals. It also warrants closer attention to when, how, and for what purpose nationalists distinguished modern from ancient Hebrew and spoken from written Hebrew.

Buber’s engagement with these questions involved political, theological, and personal dimensions—often at odds with one another. To be sure, his knowledge of classical Hebrew put him in a better position than many of his co-ideologues. It was this ability that also enabled him to embark on the ambitious endeavor of translating the Bible. At this point, however, let us briefly address the parallel case of Franz Rosenzweig, Buber’s close friend and partner in translation, whose own biographical trajectory was closer to the prototype of German Jews drawn to discover and mold their Judaism. Examining his path and struggle with Hebrew would allow us to then situate the translation within the Hebrew and German questions of the time.

### Rosenzweig’s Hebrew

Franz Rosenzweig’s decision in 1906 (at the age of twenty) to learn Hebrew marked the beginning of his lifelong engagement with Judaism, religiosity, and the theological dimensions of language.<sup>120</sup> He studied with Hermann Cohen and wrote his dissertation under the guidance of Friedrich Meinecke on Hegel’s political philosophy. During the war, which he spent mostly as a soldier in Macedonia, Rosenzweig studied Jewish sources intensively. He also engaged in public debates, and in 1917 published an open letter to Hermann Cohen, calling for the establishment of a Jewish academy of sciences that would lead to a reform in the structure of Jewish education in Germany. Its aim would be to draw young Jews to Judaism and to create a Jewish “sphere,” set apart from the non-Jewish environment while remaining an integral part of it. Learning Hebrew would be a central pillar of this endeavor, in particular to gain access to Jewish prayers and the Bible. While Germans—Jews

and non-Jews—can read the Bible in German, it is “only in Hebrew,” he asserted, that “the Jew can understand it.”<sup>121</sup> In this regard, Rosenzweig echoed Cohen’s view of the supremely religious role of Hebrew in Jewish life. What is more, Rosenzweig believed that studying the Bible in any language other than Hebrew would not fill the spiritual function the Bible ought to have.

Like Buber, Rosenzweig saw the war as an event of higher, world-historical magnitude. For him, it signaled the decay of the Bismarckian nation-state, prompting a shift toward a world order grounded on inclusive imperial states. As did Britain and Russia, Germany presented its own vision which, Rosenzweig believed, could potentially accelerate the path toward the creation of a “Kingdom of God” on earth.<sup>122</sup> The course of the war led him to disappointment facing the understanding that Germany was to remain “a sad small-bourgeois continental middle-state.”<sup>123</sup> The ambiguous prospect of normalization also constituted his critique of Zionism. In a letter from 1917 he wrote with dismay on the desire of Zionists “to create their Serbia or Bulgaria or Montenegro in Palestine.”<sup>124</sup> The vision of an elevated ideal of nationhood—higher than its ethnic-territorial basis—underlay his view of German and Jewish nationhoods alike.

During the war, Rosenzweig also worked on *The Star of Redemption*, which he published in 1921. Considered already upon its publication as a milestone of German Jewish thought, it also engaged with the linguistic predicament of Judaism. Rosenzweig dwelt on how Hebrew had “vanished from the everyday” in the era of exile, thus forcing Jews to acquire the tongues of their countries. The Jew’s “linguistic life” in this predicament was led to figure that “its real linguistic homeland is elsewhere, in the domain of the holy language that is inaccessible to everyday speech.” Yet it was this shift that also guaranteed—so long as Hebrew remained the language of prayer—the distinct holiness of the language, carrying in it the promise of redemption.<sup>125</sup>

Rosenzweig’s Hebraism differed from Zionist Hebraism in its adherence to Hebrew’s religious roles of learning and ritual.<sup>126</sup> His approach to Hebrew ultimately did not come as a threat or a substitute to other languages spoken by Jews. Indeed, it was to strengthen the Jewish spirit from within its diasporic condition and through the recognition of the specifically Jewish traits of diasporic existence.<sup>127</sup> This was also the purpose of his pedagogic work at an adult education institute in Frankfurt, Freies jüdisches Lehrhaus, starting

1920. A leading institution among various of this type in Weimar Germany, it offered Jews of all backgrounds courses in Jewish history, culture, and religion alongside Hebrew classes.

Rosenzweig's critique of Zionism was related to his broader concern with Hebrew's vernacularization. Obfuscating the supreme role of ancient Hebrew, Rosenzweig warned, went against the fundamentals of Jewish culture. He saw Ahad Ha-Am's writing as a model of Jewish linguistic revival that does not reject its roots. Writing in 1916 to his parents, he praised Ahad Ha-Am's Hebrew as "rich with a literary past. Every word has the vehemence of a citation," bound up with theological, literary, and judicial post-biblical Hebrew.<sup>128</sup> It was this reaching out to the Jewish past that was commendable in the Hebraist revival, not the reduction of Hebrew to a vernacular. "Zionists," he wrote in 1919, "go into raptures over a menu written in modern Hebrew well more than Psalms and the Prophets taken together, and [they] lose every measure."<sup>129</sup>

Rosenzweig elaborated on the theological and ideological challenge posed by Zionism in a 1926 review of Klatzkin's translation of Spinoza's *Ethics*. He lauded the translator for his ability to make the text appear "more original than the original itself," referring to the Jewish aspects of Spinoza's philosophical categories and the imprint of medieval Hebrew on them.<sup>130</sup> Yet Klatzkin's achievement reinforced Rosenzweig's doubt as to the Zionist attempt to render Hebrew mundane. In his view, Hebrew's status is distinct from that of other national languages. Because of the ancient, religious content it carries in Jewish tradition, Hebrew had been set apart from the vicissitudes of everyday life and speech. Against Klatzkin's position, Rosenzweig argued that one cannot eschew the sanctity embedded in the Hebrew tongue: "To read Hebrew implies a readiness to assume the total heritage of the language."<sup>131</sup> The different layers carried by the language continue to operate whenever one reads Klatzkin's translation "or even a Hebrew newspaper." Rosenzweig collapsed the distinction between ancient and modern Hebrew so as to indicate that the creation of a "new Hebrew" in Palestine, grounded in the break with the Holy Tongue, goes against the "law of Jewish destiny." The reality of modern Hebrew might annul this law, "but it [Hebrew] would have to bear the consequences."<sup>132</sup>

Scholars have interpreted Rosenzweig's critique of secular Zionism as anchored in his view of the continuity of Jewish religion and its embodiment in the Hebrew language.<sup>133</sup> Another way to examine his preoccupation with the relation between written and spoken, holy and mundane, Hebrew, is through the ideological nerves on which it touched. A possible influence of Rosenzweig's critique of Klatzkin could be found in a 1923 volume of *Der Jude*, in which Rosenzweig published an essay. In the same volume, there appeared a German translation of a Hebrew text from 1918 called "Language Wandering" (*Nedude lashon*).<sup>134</sup> The author, Rachel Katsnelson, described the linguistic journey she and a generation of Zionists made from Russian to Yiddish and eventually to Hebrew. Katsnelson described the emotion the Hebrew language had stirred in her, even in everyday speech and texts, providing a sense of refuge: "The Hebrew writer will always have more confidence and his sense of authenticity will be fuller [than the Yiddish writer], for he has the unmediated awareness that, through the Hebrew language, he connects and continues to spin the thread of eternity in some hidden ways."<sup>135</sup> Katsnelson belonged to a group of secular socialist Zionists, yet she emphasized the religious aspect of Hebrew's revival: "The national strength latent in the Hebrew language lived even in Diaspora. The religion preserved it. . . . Religious thought—whether it was poetry, philosophy, or science, it was always religious—that sublime spiritual enterprise, was nourished by the treasury of energy of the Hebrew language, and itself enriched that treasury with expressions, intentions, and nuances, in which the lives of generations were preserved."<sup>136</sup>

Commenting on the language wars waged in Palestine, Katsnelson reflected on how each Hebrew word was loaded with a pristine content: "Those who fight against Hebrew . . . , and sometimes even those who defend it, do not know who are the decisive participants in the war. . . . Outside the debating rooms, in all the space of our world, Hebrew fights the war herself, and how powerful are her weapons: every Hebrew word in which we still hear its genuine content; and with it are fighting for Hebrew among us: Moses and Jeremiah, the prayerbook and the Haggadah, Rabbi Jehudah Ha-Levi and Rabbi Nachman Krocmal."<sup>137</sup> It is possible that Rosenzweig, likely familiar with the text, found in it a testimony of the persistence of religious

sentiments and meanings that continued to reverberate in the Hebrew renaissance. In this regard, the fact that Katsnelson was a secular, Zionist activist in Palestine could only reaffirm Rosenzweig's concerns about Hebrew's revival and transformation. The ideological dimension of Rosenzweig's approach to Hebrew also appeared in a letter he wrote in 1924 to Ernst Markowicz, a young German Jew who was drawn to Judaism. Rosenzweig encouraged him to persist in his efforts despite the difficulties, hoping that "you will not stop at formal Zionism, but rather find again the chain of history, if not with Akiva then with Aher, but not in an empty space between the two, in which only Klatzkin is able to breathe sufficient amount of oxygen because he is the son of his father, while his followers suffocate."<sup>138</sup> Rosenzweig implied that what for Klatzkin comes easily owing to his religious and linguistic background was in fact an insurmountable challenge for his Western followers. They lack the privilege of "breathing" freely within Hebrew and Judaism but nonetheless are pressed to do so.

Rosenzweig's letter attested to how he perceived Klatzkin and secular nationalism as confronting German Jews with an impossible demand. His position regarding the theological tensions of Hebraist Zionism was entwined with a more pragmatic observation on the sociolinguistic status of ordinary German Jews. When writing about Hebrew's "vanishing" from Jewish everyday life, this had theological but also social consequences for his generation. An examination of some of his diary entries demonstrates this point. After reading about the debates of the meeting of the Union of German Rabbis in 1916, Rosenzweig noted that Hebrew should be pursued not as an object of study but as the medium through which all religious content reaches the student. However, when discussing the difficulty of this approach, the two dimensions surfaced: "Hebrew is to some extent more than easy . . . but on the other hand so difficult that it can be read in a certain sense only due to the knowledge that even the greatest expert can only understand the text hypothetically (Job and much of the prophets), therefore it is certainly possible."<sup>139</sup> Rosenzweig fused here the two ways in which Hebrew had vanished: in ancient history (once it ceased to be used in everyday) and in modern history (with German Jews' departure from Hebrew). By placing the Western Jew along the rest of modern readers in their obstructed access to ancient Hebrew, the linguistic inferiority of the German Jew appeared to be of minor

importance. Hebrew's condition as a vanished language rendered its modern readers equal in front of Hebrew—at least in terms of the access to the genuine meaning of the Scriptures. In this respect, Hebrew is a language that cannot be truly known.

Another instance in which Rosenzweig complicated the notion of “knowing Hebrew” appears in a letter he wrote to Scholem in 1921.<sup>140</sup> The letter has drawn the attention of scholars for its discussion of the extent to which the German language is steeped in Christian notions, fueled primarily by Luther's translation of the Bible and nourished by later poets and thinkers: “Anyone who translates into the German language must to some extent translate into Christian language.”<sup>141</sup> For this reason, Jews praying in German are in an impossible position given that it is only Hebrew that transmits the core of the Jewish religion: “Jewish prayer means praying in Hebrew. . . . Such is our situation. But after all we're deep in it. In a sense we are ourselves guests at our own table, we ourselves, I myself. So long as we speak German (and even if we speak Hebrew, *Modern Hebrew*, the Hebrew of '1921!') we cannot avoid this detour that again and again leads us the hard way from what is alien back to our own.”<sup>142</sup> The parenthetical words deserve our attention. By equating German with modern Hebrew, Rosenzweig pointed to the lack of an even hypothetical way of reaching the Hebrew language in its fullness.

Unlike Buber, Rosenzweig did not attempt to acquire modern Hebrew. In 1929, when he first saw drafts of excerpts from *Star of Redemption* translated into Hebrew, he admitted that it seemed to him “abound with misunderstandings or forthright incomprehension,” and wondered whether this had to do with his lack of familiarity with modern Hebrew, “or perhaps it always seems that way to the author?”<sup>143</sup> He did not dismiss the effort of Zionists and others to acquire Hebrew, yet at the heart of this endeavor, Rosenzweig believed, there lay a condition that cannot be undone. One should learn Hebrew, but true knowledge of it was beyond reach. In this sense, too, the fate of Hebraist Zionists and German Jews learning Hebrew was one and the same.

Rosenzweig's approach to Hebrew involved a factor that is insufficiently explored in German Jewish historiography, namely the Hebrew pressure emanating from Palestine and from Eastern European Zionism. Both in his publications and in his correspondence Rosenzweig pointed to a common



denominator between Jews pursuing Hebrew in Germany and those practicing it in Palestine. They both faced an unbridgeable gap between the Holy Tongue—in its lost ancient vitality—and the tireless efforts to recover it. Indeed, precisely because of Hebrew’s holiness, it could no longer be reached. This position drew on a theological problem that had preoccupied Jewish thinkers for centuries.<sup>144</sup> Yet while Zionists such as Bialik saw the Hebraist revival as a link that fills the historical gap, Rosenzweig’s approach emphasized the inability to close that gap. This difference was not a mere extension of the quarrel between Zionists and their critics but was part of a longer discussion, crossing ideological and religious affiliations, over the Jewish linguistic condition.

Despite their different political leanings, Buber and Rosenzweig sought for ways to locate Hebrew within the German-speaking Jewish sphere without succumbing to the demand posed by Hebraists to overcome the diasporic linguistic predicament. They both grappled with the consequences of a Hebrew revival. Both authors raised the tension between classical and modern Hebrew as a means to address theological and political questions but also as a means to address the concrete problem of not speaking Hebrew. It is against this background that we turn to their primary collaboration—the translation of the Bible into German.

### Translating the Bible

Buber had contemplated translating the Bible already before the war, but it was only the invitation from a publisher in 1925 that set the project in motion. Rosenzweig accepted Buber’s offer to coauthor the translation, and the book of Genesis was published in 1926. After Rosenzweig’s death in 1929, Buber continued publishing the books until 1938. After the war, Buber resumed the work on the project, completing it in 1961. Both in their correspondence and in essays, Rosenzweig and Buber related the task of translation to the ambition to retrieve the “concrete, fundamental meaning of each individual word” of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>145</sup> Capturing the Bible in its “spokenness” was their main goal.<sup>146</sup>

In a 1926 essay, Buber explained this ambition: “Do we mean a book? We mean that people should learn to hear it. There is no other going back but the

turning around that turns us about our own axis until we reach, not an earlier stretch of our path, but the path on which we can hear the voice! We want to go straight through to the spokenness, to the being-spoken, of the word."<sup>147</sup> In another essay, Rosenzweig emphasized that striving for the Bible's spokenness was in line with the original nature of the Bible, which was to be read aloud. It therefore "must not, even *qua* book, enter entirely into *Schrifttum*, into literature. Its unique content forbids it to become wholly *Schrift*."<sup>148</sup> In accordance with this premise, the translators adhered to the Hebrew text's poetic and semantic features. For instance, the term *ruah elohim* (Spirit of God) was translated as *Braus Gottes* (surge of God), in an attempt to capture the dual meaning of *ruah* in Hebrew as both "spirit" and "wind," a duality that German translations since Luther—using the word *Geist*—had failed to capture.

Buber and Rosenzweig also tried to bring the German translation closer to the original by abiding to the sonic affinity between words that shared a common root. For instance, the Hebrew word *korban* ("sacrificial offering") comes from the root *krb*, which is also the root of the word *karov* ("close" or "near"). Buber and Rosenzweig translated *korban* as *Darnahung* ("bringing near")—a highly idiosyncratic choice. The translated Bible was also to follow the Hebrew rhythm of recitation, being divided into "natural speech-units, dictated by the laws of breathing and delineated according to meaning."<sup>149</sup> Both in their overall ambition and in their translation techniques, Buber and Rosenzweig sought to retrieve a weakened quality of the Bible as a realm of direct dialogue between the individual and God.

The result, which to the German reader often sounded foreign and awkward, was indeed the uncanny feeling that the translators had aimed to generate. It was to remind constantly the German (Jewish or Christian) reader of the Bible's being an ancient Hebrew text. As Mara Benjamin has argued, Rosenzweig and Buber's Bible aimed at superseding the Christian meanings with which Luther had imbued the Bible in his translation. Buber and Rosenzweig would thus retrieve, through Hebraized German, the Bible's original character.<sup>150</sup> The style and translation choices drew wide attention and appreciation among German Jewish critics, along with considerable criticism.<sup>151</sup> Hebrew authors responded positively to the translation. In a private

letter to the translators, Klatzkin praised the translation for “making the Hebrew original clearer, more definite, and understandable; should it still be seen as a translation?”<sup>152</sup>

Rosenzweig and Buber refrained from explicitly ascribing political meaning to their translation project. Different studies in the past few decades have delved into how forms of political critique emerge from Buber and Rosenzweig’s translation and accompanying essays, situating it in a longer German Jewish tradition of translation, in the Weimar modernist context, and in the Jewish-Christian dialogue in modern Germany. The context of Hebraist politics laid out in this chapter offers us another, complementary way to assess the language politics of Buber and Rosenzweig’s project.

The theme of the Bible’s “spokenness” deserves close attention in this connection. Since the 1900s, and particularly after the war, the dominant Zionist view was that Hebrew should be the language of an autonomous Jewish political entity in Palestine. Depicting an aspirational (and to some degree, accomplished) reality of a Hebrew-speaking community as the epitome of “authentic” Jewish existence was part of the ideological vision that largely targeted diaspora Jews. Considering the heated debates around the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language, the effort by Buber and Rosenzweig to capture the spokenness of the Bible offered an alternative path to the aura of authenticity embedded in spoken Hebrew. Paradoxically, Buber and Rosenzweig elevated the Bible’s spokenness while conceding that the modern Jew’s access to the ancient texts was inevitably limited. Yet it was this duality that allowed them to blur the distinction between the Hebrew-speaking Jew and the non-Hebrew-speaking Jew, a distinction that had been a postulate of the Hebraist pressure.

Buber and Rosenzweig’s path to Hebrew was made up of chiefly intellectual engagement with classical Hebrew. Hebrew’s rapid nationalization and secularization forced them to address the theological status of modern Hebrew. Rosenzweig’s concern with the Zionist cause and its potential impact on the holiness of Hebrew—and indeed, of Judaism—arguably fueled the very ambition to restore Biblical Hebrew’s spokenness. Buber’s focus on the primacy of the Bible, emphasizing the values attached to it rather than the mere use of Hebrew, also distinguished him from dominant varieties of Zionist Hebraism. Buber and Rosenzweig differed in their assessment

of the Hebrew revival, yet both of their approaches to Hebrew involved an attraction to and critique of the return to Hebrew—as a modern language and as a tenet of Judaism.

In an essay Buber published in 1930, he defended the defamiliarization of the Bible as a necessary step in the effort to experience the Bible in its “actual reality,” namely by “working into the text” and feeling its “concrete fundamental significance” more pronouncedly than the sensation of those who “inhabit the text.”<sup>153</sup> This task, he added, also applied to those who *do* read the Bible in Hebrew, insofar as they “seek to free the living There and Then—and thereby the corporeality of the biblical spirit—from the verbal conventionality that at once overspreads the reading of any current student of Hebrew, regardless of whether the student’s sense of what the words ostensibly mean is derived from a dictionary or from the casual talk [*Vulgargespräch*] of instructional conversation.”<sup>154</sup> Buber alluded to how contemporary Hebrew could not provide the sense of immediacy required to “reach” the Bible. Modern Hebrew was therefore inflected with “verbal conventionality” (*Wort-geläufigkeit*) that by its very nature obstructed the way to the Bible. In this respect, too, the modern way of speaking Hebrew appeared as a separate, indeed inferior, form of “spokenness” than the form of spokenness Buber and Rosenzweig’s translation set out to reach.

As we have seen, Buber and Rosenzweig struggled to come to terms with modern Hebrew. Rosenzweig remarked on the sense of estrangement he encountered even—or precisely—when reading his own work in translation. Buber, facing the far more pressing prospect of teaching in Jerusalem, spent years in efforts to be able to communicate his thoughts in Hebrew. In the years preceding his departure from Germany, he worked intensively on his Hebrew and took rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel as a Hebrew tutor.<sup>155</sup> When visiting a group of students at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1936, he asked the students to speak to him in Hebrew but preferred to answer in German.<sup>156</sup> After moving to Palestine in 1938, Buber gave his first speech in Hebrew, and an audience of 1,500 people gave a “passionate standing ovation” the moment he started uttering words in Hebrew. This moment was reported in the Berlin-based Jewish periodical *Jüdische Rundschau* under the title “Buber’s First Hebrew Speech.”<sup>157</sup> Without reducing their thought to entirely personal motives, it seems plausible to argue that Buber’s and

Rosenzweig's ambivalent approach to modern Hebrew drew not only on their philosophical and theological views but also on their immediate experience with spoken Hebrew.

Since the late eighteenth century, German Jews of various religious and political proclivities adopted the German language, deeming it a language in which one's Jewishness could be fully expressed. The stiffening of the national boundaries of language in the wake of the war challenged their ability to reconcile Jewish self-understanding and rootedness in German. As both German and Hebrew were being appropriated into categories of territorial nationhood, the task of the translators was not merely to close the linguistic gap between the original text and the reader but to probe the political contours of the linguistic gap itself.

By rendering the German language "more Jewish," Buber and Rosenzweig drew from a waning ideology of culture that retained a constructive ambivalence between various categories of belonging to both German and Jewish collectives. Unable and unwilling to succumb fully to the Hebrew pressure, the translation by Buber and Rosenzweig was a means of preserving the dialectic between intimacy and foreignness in German. By introducing the "spoken" biblical Hebrew into the German language, their translation was a tribute and contribution to the abstract, somewhat unreachable Hebrew to which German Jews could relate—as opposed to the modern, everyday Hebrew cherished by Zionists in Palestine and Eastern Europe. It is therefore more than a mere detail that both Buber and Rosenzweig grappled with the value, limits, and price of learning modern Hebrew. They were fascinated by the apparent continuities between the two Hebrews and by the spiritual rupture it involved. In the face of Hebrew's transformation, it was the German language through which the translators could capture Hebrew's religious valence as it was threatening to be dimmed.

## THE GERMANIC QUESTION

### *The Lineage of Yiddish in Jewish Nationalist Quarrels*

The entanglements of German and Hebrew in Jewish nationalism had to do mostly with the symbolic and political status of each language. The entanglements of Yiddish and German, however, were also rooted in a linguistic knot. Ideological motivations and prejudices loomed large in debates about the linguistic development of Yiddish, and the issue of the dominant Germanic element in Yiddish informed the ways in which Yiddish was described, analyzed, and mobilized.<sup>1</sup> As seen in Chapter 1, the idea that German was a proper language while Yiddish merely a distortion or a deviation from it was an ideological position which both Jews and non-Jews frequently repeated.

The multiple names used to denote Yiddish in different times and places are indicative of the different ways in which it can be perceived: “Jewish-German,” “the Jewish Language,” “the Language of Ashkenaz,” “Jewish,” “Hebrew-German,” “Jargon,” and other variations.<sup>2</sup> In Yiddish writings, the Yiddish language is frequently called *taytsh*, namely “German.” The verb *taytshn*, or *fartaytshn*, means “to translate” or “to explain,” owing to the use of Yiddish translations in clarifying Hebrew and Aramaic phrases.<sup>3</sup> Jews continued to use Yiddish after leaving Germanic lands, but the Yiddish used in Russia and Poland was often marked by significant presence of Slavic elements. The relation between Yiddish and German is therefore a complex one: it can illustrate Jewish linguistic separation but also Jewish interaction with Germanic languages and cultures.<sup>4</sup>

Yiddish was never a state language, and until 1925 there was no successful attempt to create an institution for the research of Yiddish language and culture. The establishment of YIVO (Yidisher visenshaftlekher institut) in Vilna in that year was the first to promote systematically the standardization of Yiddish.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Yiddish was never a uniform language, with variations evolving across time and in different parts of the Jewish diaspora. Eastern Yiddish evolving since the eighteenth century differed significantly from Western Yiddish. The presence of Semitic, Slavic, and other linguistic elements also differed along regional, class, and religious lines.<sup>6</sup> That Yiddish was a stateless and transterritorial language also lent itself to characterization as a pragmatic instrument of communication rather than a core aspect of a culture and a nation.

The long and convoluted history of Yiddish across the Jewish diaspora also shaped the ambiguous image of Yiddish in Jewish societies as a language that is both close to and far from German. There is an old joke where a German asks a Jew: “Sprechen Sie Deutsch?” To which the Jew answers: “Vos far a shayle!” (in Yiddish, “but of course!”)—using a Hebrew-based noun that a German speaker would not be able to understand. In different social situations, German and Yiddish were used in tandem, with actual or apparent proximity between the languages serving different functions. In the meetings of the first Jewish socialist movement convened in 1876 in London—comprised exclusively of Eastern European immigrants—most spoke Yiddish, but the more educated used a certain “symbiosis” of the two languages, conveying not only their linguistic proclivity for German but also their attachment to German socialist thought.<sup>7</sup>

The fluidity between German and Yiddish was also used as a means to handle state policies. The editor of the first Yiddish periodical in Imperial Russia, *Kol mevaser* (published in Odessa between 1862 and 1873) was able to obtain a permit to publish it only after asserting that it was “German in Hebrew letters” and by publishing it as a supplement to the Hebrew periodical *Ha-Melits*. When imperial censors discovered that the supplement was in fact in Yiddish, they forced the editor to “Germanize” its Yiddish to prevent the periodical’s closure.<sup>8</sup> In 1883, after the Russian authorities banned the performance of any Yiddish theater plays, some Yiddish groups disguised

themselves as German-speaking theater groups while in fact performing in Yiddish.<sup>9</sup>

Given the different facets of the relation between Yiddish and German, it should come as no surprise that this issue occupied an important role in debates between Jewish nationalists since the late nineteenth century. Hostile attitudes to Yiddish in Jewish society had cemented already in the Berlin Haskalah and were invigorated in several streams of the Eastern European Haskalah in the following decades. In the late nineteenth century, maskilim and Yiddish writers began defending the legitimacy of Yiddish, and a range of literary works produced by writers such as Mendele Moykher-Sforim, Sholem Aleichem, and Y. L. Peretz helped to rehabilitate the image of Yiddish.

In the 1880 and 1890s, Jewish and non-Jewish socialist organizations in Europe identified the potential of Yiddish to serve as a language of political agitation, publishing Yiddish newspapers and organizing mass events conducted in Yiddish.<sup>10</sup> In the United States, and particularly in New York, Yiddish served as a primary vehicle for the politicization of the Jewish working class. As Tony Michels notes, the German language played an important role in the mobilization of Russian Jewish immigrants, facilitating the interaction between Russian-Jewish and German (mostly non-Jewish) socialist circles.<sup>11</sup> Different political groups made extensive use of Yiddish in order to reach the masses and mobilize them to action. It was not uncommon for non-Yiddish speakers to acquire the language in order to take part in Yiddish-based political activism. In England, a non-Jewish German anarchist, Rudolf Rocker, occupied a central role in Jewish anarchist groups, learned Yiddish, and in 1898 became an editor of the Yiddish radical newspaper *Arbeter fraynd*.<sup>12</sup> In Russia, the 1905 Revolution and the tsarist government's ensuing reforms enabled Jewish political movements to expand their activity dramatically. This led to the consolidation of a vibrant Yiddish cultural and political sphere.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the political status of Yiddish gained in prominence, with Yiddish standing at the center of different branches of Jewish nationalism. Key among these were proponents of "diaspora nationalism"—an umbrella term designating different ideological directions predicated on forms of Jewish self-government in the diaspora.



Advancing secular and socialist visions of Jewish nationhood, diaspora nationalists underscored language as a fundamental aspect of Jewish being, one that illustrates the historical chain of Jewish cultural and intellectual creativity. Some diaspora nationalists, such as Haim Zhitlowsky, elevated Yiddish as the key tenet of Jewish national secular culture. Simon Dubnow's autonomist view envisioned a status quo in which Jews would be proficient in Hebrew, Yiddish, and the state languages.<sup>13</sup> The Jewish revolutionary workers party, known as the Bund, placed Yiddish at the heart of its ideology after 1905.<sup>14</sup> It was this dimension of Yiddish as a national language—as opposed to its functional status as a Jewish vernacular only—that turned in the first years of the century into a matter of heated debate.

The Yiddish-Hebrew debate (or “the language quarrel,” as it was frequently called) did not revolve around the prevailing Jewish linguistic order. There was no denying that Yiddish was the language of most Ashkenazi Jews and that this would remain the case for the foreseeable future. The disagreement arose, however, with regard to a number of questions: Should Yiddish be seen as a national language, or merely as a functional vehicle serving specific practices in Jewish diasporic life? Should Jews unite around their primordial language of ritual, Hebrew? Was the prospect of rendering Hebrew a spoken, native tongue for Jews of all classes a realistic one or a utopian distraction? Can a language of religious ritual become a spoken language, and is that a sensible goal at all? Does Yiddish propel assimilation or rather national self-assertion?

As is the case with any debate about national futures, the Jewish debate was deeply rooted in conceptions of the past. It was in this connection that the German language was of high relevance. The narrative of ideological bifurcation—between Hebraists and Yiddishists—in Jewish language politics of the turn of the century does not fully capture the multilingual dimensions of this debate. At a practical level, many of those participating in the Jewish language quarrels were proficient in both Hebrew and Yiddish (as well as other languages). There are endless examples of staunch Hebraists who preferred to speak and write in Yiddish. At another level, the history of Yiddish was at no point a secluded one. Both socially and linguistically, Yiddish was entwined with other languages. This chapter focuses on one of these dimensions—the relationship of Yiddish to German and its significance in

Jewish nationalism. Both Yiddishists and their opponents could not make a claim for the legitimacy or illegitimacy of Yiddish as a Jewish national language without addressing the question of the historical roots of Yiddish. The arguments and counterarguments used in these debates reveal the steady presence of German in Jewish nationalism and the historical tensions it aroused.

### Zionism and the Location of Yiddish

The notion that Yiddish is essentially corrupted German is centuries old. The German Haskalah made extensive use of this trope, aligning the politics of Jewish modernization with the growing tendencies in Germany to depict German as a pure, harmonious language.<sup>15</sup> Such perceptions were not uncommon among Central European Zionists, but they were counterbalanced by recognition of its profound importance in Jewish Ashkenazi cultures.<sup>16</sup> In periodicals, anthologies, and translations, German Zionists often expressed reverence to and fascination with the world of Yiddish. Martin Buber, in his 1905 preface to his translation of a Yiddish play, noted that Yiddish is “by no means merely a dialect.” It is a language, he said, that “at present is not rich, and yet it is supple, it is less abstract than Hebrew but it is warmer.” It is in Yiddish, Buber proclaimed, that “the popular (*das Volkstümliche*) has become a language.”<sup>17</sup> Despite Zionists’ ideological commitment to Hebrew, Yiddish was not necessarily marked as an enemy. In a lecture given in Berlin in 1898, Max Nordau commented on the language’s German lineage with evident sympathy: “It is a German tongue that had remained at its medieval level of development and since then was disfigured by Hebrew and Slavic trespasses. But it is nonetheless German, the German of Jews expelled from their fatherland in the fourteenth century and who took it with them into Casimir the Great’s kingdom, where they have stayed until today, almost six centuries later, still remaining loyal to it.” Viewing Yiddish as a deformed variation of German, Nordau also found it noteworthy that Eastern European Jews had persistently followed the “German spirit’s glorious ray of light.”<sup>18</sup>

A similar position was propagated by Heinrich Loewe, a German Zionist who wrote a monograph on Jews’ languages in 1911, in which he described how Jews “took with them their German language to the East.”<sup>19</sup> In a pattern comparable to that of Jews who, in earlier centuries, were forced to leave Persia and Spain, German Jews “carried with them the language of their

persecutors,” creating thus a “German-speaking Jewish people.”<sup>20</sup> During the first two years of the First World War, as we saw in Chapter 5, the proximity between Yiddish and German served Zionists in arguing for German support of Jewish national interests by emphasizing the practical benefit of cooperation with the Yiddish-speaking population. In 1915, Loewe wrote a booklet in support of this cause. He emphasized the “peculiar fact” that Eastern European Jews were the linguistic allies of Germany, and that “the large majority of Jews even outside of the German Reich understand German.”<sup>21</sup> Loewe conceded that words in Polish and Russian entered the language, and Hebrew words denote abstract and religious terms, “but the entire concrete world has remained German.” Despite the transformation it had undergone, “the character of the language remained German, much more German than the Germanic character of contemporary English.” Seeking to rehabilitate Yiddish both as a product of the German world and as an independent, legitimate language, Loewe argued that “German-Jewish is in no way a mixed language but a German dialect that for four centuries had been compelled to develop independently but which was continuously bound up with the German development and which acquired not too many foreign elements encroaching on the German character of the language.”<sup>22</sup>

In the same year, Hermann Struck, a Zionist activist, artist, and wartime officer in the German army, wrote a short “introduction to the German-Jewish language,” which was published by the “Committee for the East.” In the preface, Struck wrote on Eastern European Jews that “even though their German fatherland expelled them, these Jews have retained for centuries the German language. . . . It is nothing less than a historical wonder that seven million Jews at the heart of Russia speak the German language, even if in a dialect, which through its well-maintained medieval elements offers to Germanists a treasure trove.”<sup>23</sup> He then laid out in two parallel columns different Yiddish texts next to their German transliterations, including the first chapter from the book of Genesis, a poem by Y. L. Peretz, and the 1915 decree of the Austro-Hungarian army to the Jews of Poland, appearing in Figure 9. The comparison was designed to demonstrate the close affinity between Yiddish and German. The booklet ended with a call on Germans to embrace Eastern European Jews as bearers of the German language, citing the German Romantic writer Jean Paul: “Mother tongues are the hearts of nations.”

Daß heute schon dem Jüdisch-deutschen an maßgebender Stelle eine gewisse Bedeutung beigemessen wird, erhellt aus dem nachfolgenden Aufruf, den die vereinigten Oberkommandos der deutschen und österreichischen Armeen an die Juden Polens erlassen haben.

## Zu di Iden in Poilen.

Di heldische Armies fun di große mittel-europäische Regirungen, Deutschland un Estreich-Ungarn seinen arein in Poilen.

Der mechtiger Marsch fun unsere Armies, hot gezwungen di despotische rußische Regirung zu antloifen.

Unsere Fohnen bringen eich Recht un Freiheit: gleiche Birgerrecht, Freiheit farn Glauben, Freiheit zu arbeiten ungeschert in ale Zweigen fun ekonomischen un kulturelen Leben in eier Geist,

Wi Freind kumen mir zu eich.

Di gleiche Recht far Iden sol werin gebaut oif feste Fundamenten.

Lost eich nischt, wi a Bach<sup>1)</sup> mol friher, obnaren<sup>2)</sup> durch chnufe'dige<sup>3)</sup> Verschprechungen!

Zu<sup>4)</sup> hot nischt eich in 1905 di memscholoh<sup>5)</sup> zugesagt di gleiche Recht far Iden, un zu hot si nischt daroif gegeben dem hechsten Manifest?

Wi hot men eich abgezohlt dem dosigen hoiw<sup>6)</sup>, wos men hot oif sich genumen far der ganzer Welt?

Gedenkt dos Aroistreiben, wos men treibt tog-täglich di idische Massen fun seiere eingeseße M'kolmois!<sup>7)</sup>

Gedenkt Kischinew, Homel, Bialistok, Siedlez, un flael hunderter andere blutige Pogromen!

Gedenkt dem Beilis-Prozess, un die Arbeit fun di barbarische Regirung zu ferbreiten dem schrecklichen Ligen fun Blut-Gebroich bei di Iden!

Asoi hot di memscholoh gehalten ihr Wort, wos si hot gegeben, seiendig in di Klem!

In ihrer Noth befindlich, erwekt si di barbarische That fun di Deitschen in Kalisch. ober emessogendig<sup>8)</sup> is dos forgekomen, nur weil die Arestanten senen freigelassen fon di Russen, wi sei senen obgetreten, ekstra mit Gewehr fersehn, damit sei sollen oif di Deitschen schiffen. Natirlich hot dos heroisgerufen noitwendige Gegensehtand fon di ortige militärische Macht, um di Ruhe un Ordnung herzuschstellen.

Eier heiliger Choiv is izt, zusammen zu nemen ale Kreften, mitzuarbeiten bei di Befreiung.

## צו די אידען אין פוילען.

די העלדישע ארמיעס פון די גרויסע מיטעל-אייראפעישע רעגירונגען, דייטשלאנד און עסטרייך-אונגארן זיינען אריין אין פוילען.

דער מעכטיגער מארש פון אינזערע ארמיעס, האט געצוואונגען די דעספאטישע רוסישע רעגירונג צו אנטלויפען.

אינזערע פאדענען אידן רעכט און פרייהייט: גלויבע בירגעררעכט, פרייהייט פארן גלויבע, פרייהייט צו ארבייטען אונגעשטערט אין אלע צווייגען פון עקאנאמישען און קולטורעלען לעבען אין אייער גייסט.

ווי פריינד קומען מיר צו אידן.

די גלויבע רעכט פאר אידען זאל ווערן געבויט אויף פעסטע פונדאמענטען.

לאזט אידן נישט, ווי א סך מאל פריהער, אבנארען דורך חנופהדיגע פערשפרעכונגען:

צו האט נישט אידן אין 1905 די ממשלה צו געזאגט די גלויבע רעכט פאר אידען, און צו האט זי נישט דארויף געגעבען דעם העכסטען מאניפעסט?

ווי האט מען אידן אבערזעהאלט דעם דאווען חוב, וואס מען האט אויף זיך גענומען פאר דער גאנצער וועלט?

געדענקט דאס ארויסמרייבען, וואס מען טרייבט טאגס-אונטאגס די אידישע מאסען פון זייערע אייגענע מקומות!

געדענקט קישניעוו, האמעל, ביאליסטאק, סיעדלעץ, און פילע הונדערטער אנדערע בלוטיגע פאגראמען!

געדענקט דעם בייליס-פראצעס, און די ארבייט פון די בארביארישע רעגירונג צו פערברייטען דעם שרעקליכען ליגען פון בלוטגעברויך ביי די אידען!

אזוי האט די ממשלה געהאלטען איהר ווארט, וואס זי האט געגעבען, זייענדיג אין די קלעם!

אין איהרער נאטה בעפינדליך, ערוועקט זי די בארביארישע מדינה פון די דייטשען אין קאליש. אבער אמתאנענדיג אז דאס פארעקאממען, נור ווייל די ארעסטאנטען זענען פרייגעלאסען פארן די רוסען, ווי זי זענען אבערזעהאלטען, עקסטרא מיט געוועהר פערזעהן, דאמט זי זאללען אויף די דייטשען שטען. נאטירליך האט דאס הערליכ גערופען נויטווענדיגע געגענשטאנד פאר די ארמיעס מיליטערישע מאסען, אום די רוהע אונט ארדנונג הערצושטעללען.

אייער הייליגער חוב איז איצט, צוזאמען צו נעמען אלע קרעפטען, מיטצוארבייטען ביי די בעפרייאונג.

1) Menge (hebr.). 2) narren. 3) schmeichlerische (hebr.). 4) etwa. 5) Regierung (hebr.). 6) Schuld (hebr.). 7) Orte (hebr.). 8) um die Wahrheit zu sagen.

FIGURE 9. The Yiddish and the German-transliterated version of the 1915 decree of the Austro-Hungarian army to the Jews of Poland. From Hermann Struck, *Ueber die jüdisch-deutsche Sprache: eine kurze Einführung* (Komitee für den Osten [1915]). National Library of Israel, 26 B 969=2. Courtesy of the National Library of Israel.

Representing Yiddish as a German language affected by a history of migration and resettlement in the east, Loewe, Struck, and Nordau represented a branch of German Zionism that sought to curb the commonplace hostility in Germany toward Yiddish. At the same time, they did not consider Yiddish as a language of Jewish nationhood. The Germanness of Yiddish was politically valuable in an era marked by the (unfulfilled) hope for German sponsorship of Zionist political efforts.

This sympathetic and at times condescending view was not the only attitude toward Yiddish in Jewish nationalist circles of the early twentieth century. In the immediate aftermath of the 1905 Russian Revolution, Yiddish became a major concern for Hebraists. In this context, some of them singled out the foreignness of Yiddish as an impediment of historic proportions to any viable vision of Jewish self-rule. In 1906, in one of the few major Hebrew literary magazines, Hebraist Yitzhak Volcani remarked sarcastically that Yiddish is nothing but Jews' cherished relic of the "exile from Ashkenaz." However, Volcani took this judgment further, deducing that "as a purpose of itself, as a national property, the Jargon has no right to exist. It is not our own creative force that has brought it into life."<sup>24</sup> Associating Yiddish with the German creative force rather than the Jewish one, Volcani rejected the status of Yiddish as a national language.

Max Rosenfeld, a Galician socialist Zionist, stated: "The resourceful Jew learned German and left his imprint upon it. By so doing he turned the German language not into a *new* German dialect but rather into a *Jewish language*."<sup>25</sup> Rosenfeld, however, drew different conclusions from Volcani, arguing that the emergence of Yiddish was essentially a product of economic and social reality and therefore should not lead to any contempt toward Yiddish speakers. It was not Jews' free choice to develop the Yiddish language, nor were Jews responsible for how it sounds: "Accusing Yiddish that it isn't pretty is like blaming mountains for being ugly."<sup>26</sup> The practical conclusion therefore should not be to fight Yiddish but to integrate it into Jewish national activity.

Pinhas Shifman, a Hebrew educator based in Odessa, wrote in 1916 that Jews have given "that German language" their own national spirit, yet the process which Yiddish signified is one of adaptation to the wider world.<sup>27</sup> The Hebrew movement, in Shifman's view, aimed for a higher goal: creativ-

ity, namely the ability “to carve out in our own lives cultural values, which would also prove to be universal values.” Bereft of their Hebrew tongue, Jews were nothing but “cultural panders, but not creators of culture. We did not produce a single collective piece of universal, eternal value.”<sup>28</sup> Ascribing Yiddish to a predicament of absolute spiritual dependence, Shifman echoed an antisemitic accusation against Jews as imitators. However, he noted that this could change once Jews embraced the Hebrew language.

Menahem Sheinkin, a Russian Zionist who settled in Palestine in the early 1900s, published in 1918 an essay on Jewish language questions, in which he described the emergence of Yiddish in the late Middle Ages as “taking shape under the German pressure” during a period of anti-Jewish hostility, violence, and expulsion. Tellingly, Sheinkin argued, Jews “did not let that vernacular penetrate the synagogue,” keeping the scripture a separate, Hebraic realm, and keeping religious terms in Hebrew rather than in German. For this reason, the Hebrew words in the “German Yiddish” did not evolve organically and therefore they represented “resistance to Yiddish.”<sup>29</sup> For Sheinkin, there was no reason the unified language of Jews should be an “incorrect German that has no immanent relationship to the soul of the nation.”<sup>30</sup> Different from Nordau, Sheinkin saw in the German roots of Yiddish not a sign of Jews’ cultural affection to their surrounding culture but a violent history of coercion. The ultimate conclusion to be drawn, however, was similar to Nordau’s—Yiddish was essentially a form of German, not a language in its own right.

Other Hebraists showed less contempt for Yiddish, even if opposing the notion that it should be recognized as a national language. The Hebraist and Galician rabbi Azriel Gintsig lamented “the end of a messianic period of twelve years, which we can call ‘the Zionist period.’” The concomitant rise of Yiddish culture had weakened Hebraism considerably, he admitted. However, he did not believe Yiddish could ever become a Jewish national language, because it was serving a traditional function as a Jewish vernacular alongside Hebrew. If anything, it was Russian and English that Yiddishists should see as their true rival considering that these appeared to be the next major vernaculars of the Jewish masses. In this respect, Gintsig acknowledged the success of Yiddish but emphasized its structural limitations as a diasporic “Jewish language, namely the German language which many Jews



have used for centuries, and doubtless left their imprint on it, making it as is well known into a *Jewish* tongue.”<sup>31</sup>

For more radical Hebraists, the Germanic roots of Yiddish were evidence of its being a product of linguistic chaos. Russian Zionist Menahem Ussishkin held that the Yiddishist educational lore, consisting in the study and cultivation of the “jargon,” could bring about only “confusion and destruction,” as it was a faulty compromise between two seemingly opposing alternatives: acquiring Hebrew or acquiring the state language.<sup>32</sup> The trope of chaos and confusion also appeared in an 1907 article by Simon Bernfeld, in which he commented on the popularity of socialist ideology in Yiddishist circles: “Because it had been translated into the jargon, the teachings of Marx and Kautsky are bound to negate Jewish nationalism. Marx has brought light upon the nations, his method trained the masses wonderfully for social and political life, but in its jargonic translation it has brought confusion to our Jewish world. . . . It is not a polemic between social groups, but deep and bitter hatred. The people is getting splintered into tiny fractures, into atoms.”<sup>33</sup> Bernfeld did not elaborate on what exactly had caused the havoc: Was it that the Jewish people was not at a level of cultural and political cohesion that could allow it to address socialist ideas properly? Was it that the act of translation into Yiddish had sowed the seeds of social disintegration? Would a Hebrew translation of Marx and Kautsky’s ideas affect the Jewish people differently? Bernfeld’s ambiguity was indicative of the unstable boundaries of the idea of Yiddish, which often stood for various maladies of Jewish history. Moreover, Bernfeld’s view tapped into the idea that German could convey clarity and serious ideas, whereas Yiddish degenerated the content it absorbed. In this sense, the distinction between proper German and improper Yiddish was not merely a question of aesthetic sensitivity; it implied the degradation of intellectual content as well.

A different argument was brought up in 1908 by the Galician scholar Shimon Lazar, who claimed that in the wake of the Young Turks revolution, it was mandatory that Jews of the Ottoman Empire—both Ashkenazi and Sephardi—unite around Hebrew. This was the only language, for Lazar, that had the ability to bridge the cultural gaps between Jews of different parts of the Ottoman Empire: “Precisely now, when we must unite with the Sephardim, the fanatic jargonists purport to make the German jargon, namely

the language of ancient Germany, into a Jewish national language!" In this argument, the Germanic roots of Yiddish are proof of its inability to be considered *the* language of the Jews. He further hoped that common sense would prevent Jews from turning "the language of the ancient Franks and Swabians into a Jewish national language."<sup>34</sup>

In Palestine, Yiddish had stood at the heart of debates between branches of Jewish workers' parties over the legitimacy of its use in public meetings and in newspapers. While Hebrew gained the upper hand among the parties based in Palestine, Yiddish continued to be used widely. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda found this a menace to the Yishuv's future and in 1910 called socialist Zionists who continued to use Yiddish "*traitors, real traitors*." Speaking Yiddish in the diaspora was to some degree justified, he admitted, but "here in the land of our ancestors . . . the German Jewish exilic jargon will not unify the people but only tear it to pieces." Ben-Yehuda described how Yiddish, "in its *liveliness*, in the quality of clownishness that is embedded in it, in particular when used on the stages, captures the hearts of the laypeople, of women and children."<sup>35</sup> In an article from 1914 Ben-Yehuda presented the "jargon" as a snake that bites quickly and thus had to be destroyed immediately. He added that one could understand Yiddishists' fight for the Jewish masses' linguistic rights in the diaspora, but "in our own land! Now! On behalf of which *masses* is it even possible to defend the German jargon?"<sup>36</sup>

For Moshe Kleinman, whose 1908 account of the language quarrel was fairly balanced and free from acerbic anti-Yiddishist rhetoric, Yiddish could serve as a tool to contain Jewish linguistic unity, but it was bound to weaken in the face of a close linguistic alternative. In other words, Yiddish proved resilient linguistically in Poland because of the substantial cultural and social distance between Polish and Jewish societies, but Jews would be unable to endure the linguistic pressure coming from a German-speaking community. As the walls of the ghetto collapsed, according to Kleinman, Yiddish was losing its distinct features and would sooner or later disappear. For this reason, "Yiddish has more hopes of being preserved in Russia, for instance, than in Galicia and Bukovina, because there [in Galicia and Bukovina] Jews live, more or less, under the influence of German culture." In the face of majoritarian pressure, generational shift was creating a transition from Yiddish to German. In this respect, Kleinman depicted the relationship between



Yiddish and German as asymmetrical not because of any essential features of the German and Jewish peoples, or because of parochial behavior, but rather due to sociolinguistic dynamics of minority groups whose social boundaries were not as rigid as they used to be.<sup>37</sup> The Germanic roots of Yiddish proved then instrumental for Zionists in arguing that the prospect of a Yiddish-speaking nation was either unjustifiable or unrealistic.

### Yiddishism and the Claim for Linguistic Independence

The examples presented so far illustrate the strands of continuity between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourses and anti-Yiddishist rhetoric of the early twentieth century. The trope concerning the Germanness of Yiddish figured prominently in this context as a factor that distinguished between Hebrew's "authentic" aura and the status of Yiddish as a mixed tongue serving a limited, diasporic function. Among proponents of Yiddishism, the question of how to address the relation between Yiddish and German was not a simple one. On the one hand, the German pedigree corroborated Yiddishists' postulate that Yiddish was a product and a reflection of the lived experience of diaspora Jews, and as such had an intrinsic robust, vibrant quality to it, as opposed to the primarily textual, religiously rooted Hebrew tongue. On the other hand, it was precisely this affinity to German that was used to point out the alleged foreignness of Yiddish.

The narrative suggesting that Yiddish had emerged through contact with German dialects but had been gradually "Judaized" was commonplace and shared by different strands of Jewish nationalism. The timing, exhaustiveness, and meaning of this transition, however, were a source of consternation for Yiddishists and their opponents. Nathan Birnbaum, one of the ideologues of early Zionism, showed increasing support for diaspora nationalism in the first years of the century. He continued to see Zionism in a positive light insofar as it indicated the cultural and political revival Jewish societies were experiencing in their transition from "old" to "new" Judaism. Birnbaum praised the revival of Hebrew, but he believed that Yiddish was the bedrock of Jewish culture in Europe.<sup>38</sup> In a 1902 essay, he described Jewish Ashkenazi culture as developed by two creative forces: "The Semitic Hebrew and the Aryan German. It [the Jewish tribe] knew how to build upon both, when and where its young sprouts had sufficient time." Without ascribing

this quality fully to its linguistic roots, Birnbaum praised Yiddish for being “so unique and so suitable for expressing anything from the most glorious to the utterly common. . . . It has no reason to feel ashamed among the other languages of Europe.”<sup>39</sup>

In a speech Birnbaum gave in 1905 to a German-speaking Jewish society in Czernowitz, he celebrated Eastern European Jews’ “unity of culture seldom seen even in a territorial people.” In this respect, the Jewish emigration westwards helped crystalize this unity: “A man from Warsaw or Białystok or Odessa, who comes to Whitechapel in London or to the borough of Manhattan, is home again. . . . on the streets and in the houses—the same language, the same cultural interests, the same way of life. The literature interterritorial in spite of local color.”<sup>40</sup> Birnbaum decried the fierce opposition that the “Yiddish language movement” was experiencing, chiefly among Western European Jews: “They wail that Yiddish is German. And yet this Germanness is only a past that has been exhausted long ago. They call Yiddish a ‘jargon.’ But this is just a name, introduced by Western European Jewish literati and imposed because of their arrogance and blind, ridiculous assimilation, forgetting all laws of the origin and development of languages.”<sup>41</sup> Birnbaum sought to bring home the point that the Germanic roots of Yiddish reflected merely a historical case of language contact, not an indication of any deeper, spiritual affinity between the two languages. The implication of this was that in the present, it would be wrong to see Yiddish as carrying any trace of “Germanness.”

Despite not being a center of Yiddish culture, Czernowitz, the capital of the Austrian province of Bukovina, was also the city in which Birnbaum and other leading Yiddishists met in 1908 for an international conference on the Yiddish language. The Czernowitz conference took place after years of intensive political and cultural efforts to cultivate Yiddish and its political legitimacy. The conference had only a few dozen participants, but it brought together members of the cultural elite of Yiddish literature, as well as major figures in the Yiddishist movement. The conference’s symbolic significance—marking the consolidation of a self-confident Yiddishist political camp—affected Jewish nationalist politics tremendously, in what appeared for Zionists as an unprecedented threat to the very premises of Zionist ideology and to the historical place of Hebrew in Judaism. Perhaps most alarming was the

fact that even a canonical writer such as Y. L. Peretz helped legitimize the Yiddishist agenda by offering his support.<sup>42</sup>

One of the main goals of the conference was to push forward the notion that Yiddish was a national language, not merely a dialect. The participants of the conference were divided on whether Yiddish should be proclaimed as *the* national language of the Jewish people, or merely as *a* national language, as was ultimately the decision of the congress. Even in its moderate form, the decision was radical and provocative. There was no stenographic protocol, but through a collection of private chronicles, speech manuscripts, and press reports, YIVO published in 1931 a book that remains the most comprehensive account of the Czernowitz conference.<sup>43</sup>

The speech that tackled the Germanness of Yiddish most systematically was also the one that drew the widest attention in the Jewish press. It was delivered by a twenty-three-year-old Polish Jewish autodidact named Matthias Mieses (1885–1945), a philologist and businessman who had already engaged in heated debates with Nahum Sokolow in the previous year over the Hebraist-Yiddishist divide.<sup>44</sup> The Yiddish scholar Emanuel Goldsmith called Mieses's address "the first scientific essay in the area of Yiddish linguistics in modern times."<sup>45</sup> The historian Barry Trachtenberg likewise saw his speech as "the founding moment of a distinctly *Yidische visnschaft*."<sup>46</sup> Mieses argued for the status of Yiddish as a language by addressing historical and philological aspects. One of the issues he addressed was the language's Germanic roots. The tendency of Jews, including Yiddish speakers, to deem Yiddish a despicable language was, for Mieses, nothing but "shame, simple slave mentality," self-abnegation and imitation in the face of antisemitic pressure, a deed of accepting the "proud German's defamation."<sup>47</sup> Among Germans there prevailed a notion that their language is "the only language in Western Europe which is not mixed," an idea that made the German people feel as if they were the world's "chosen people." Considering the prevalence of German linguistic chauvinism, there was no wonder that a "proud Swabian" would degrade "our hybrid language, which is also ill-fated to be Jewish, as a jargon."<sup>48</sup>

In a later essay, published in Hebrew in 1911, Mieses argued that the claim that the "Jargon" sounds disgraceful and distorted is irrelevant for any serious discussion. The question of what Yiddish sounded like was ultimately "the

business of the gentiles. . . . [S]hould we dance by the flute of the gentiles so that they like us?" He urged his readers not to show any consideration for antisemitic accusations: "Even the contempt of the *Hebraists* is nothing but—even if unconsciously—the result of antisemitic influence. The German antisemites sense a foreign element entering the body of their language. The Jewish point irritates them in particular. But should this be *our* concern?"<sup>49</sup>

In his 1908 speech, Mises moved in two directions. First, he wrapped together the Jewish with the anti-Jewish critique of Yiddish. He posited that those Jews who dismissed Yiddish for its ugliness or hybridity should be aware that they were echoing a pernicious tradition. Indeed, Mises's depiction situated anti-Yiddishism within the realm of diasporic submission to dominant perceptions in non-Jewish societies and ascribed to Jews a self-degrading attitude. By doing so, Mises was turning on its head much of the anti-Yiddishist rhetoric, which marked Yiddish as a product of Jewish passivity and cultural powerlessness. In other words, while *Hebraists* claimed that speaking Yiddish signified an assimilatory, passive approach, for Mises it was rejecting Yiddish that signified these very tendencies.

At a second level, Mises problematized the distinction between dialect and language, and he advanced this critique precisely by targeting German. "It is not my intention to deny the high cultural level of the German people and its remarkable development," Mises stated, "but the German language, despite seeming so original, also has features of a hybrid language, of a jargon."<sup>50</sup> He then brought up various examples of words of foreign roots, as well as orthographical inconsistencies and examples that indicated "chaos" in German grammatical rules, alongside influences from French, Latin, and other languages: "A German has no right to boast about the purity of his tongue. It is true that the languages of other cultural peoples are structured no better, if not worse, and all are fundamentally jargonized. But on what exactly does the German pride himself when he looks down on us and determines that our tongue is a jargon, '*the* jargon?'"<sup>51</sup> Mises noted that even the word "Germanic" was not originally German, and the name "Berlin" stemmed from Slavic origins. He sought to show that the idea that German was a role model of a pure, proper language against which Yiddish was only a deviation, was a baseless, politically driven categorization. Indeed, "a mixed

tongue is not in any way a disadvantage. . . . Only languages of wild peoples are pure, free of any mixed elements. . . . The higher a people's cultural level, the more its tongue absorbs foreign currents."<sup>52</sup>

Reversing the traditional coordinates of linguistic romanticism, Mises offered an agenda for linguistic prestige in which the hybridity of Yiddish was a sign of strength and progress rather than chaos and confusion. Mises sought to expose the dubious assumptions underlying the moral and aesthetic separation between German and Yiddish. The logical consequence of this move, according to Mises, was that Yiddish might well be a "jargon," a combination of German and other tongues, but according to this rationale, German was a "jargon" as well, just like other Romance languages and other "cultural languages." Reframing the "jargon" question allowed Yiddish speakers to regard their language as a respectable one. In Mises's narrative, "the Jew was not a slave to the German roots. He absorbed it, built it, developed it, until a Jewish synthesis crystalized."<sup>53</sup> The features that distinguished Yiddish from German—such as the word order in a sentence, the simplification of grammatical inclinations, or the merging of words—appeared in this context as a pragmatic process of linguistic adaptation aimed at facilitating communication.<sup>54</sup>

Mises was aware of the fact that the question of the relation between Yiddish and German had to do with ideological assumptions more than with historical and linguistic facts. For this reason, the right answer to the claim that Yiddish was a "Germanic tongue written in Semitic letters" lay not in the realm of comparative linguistic studies, but in politics: "Once we declare that Yiddish is a national language, its German relationship by kin or marriage will vanish."<sup>55</sup> Mises's strategy was to "jargonize" German, but also to destabilize the very idea of "jargon," exposing its ideological underpinnings. His speech was a landmark in Yiddishists' effort to confront the Germanic lineage of Yiddish—and to emancipate themselves from it.

If Mises tackled the idea of "jargon," another Yiddishist linguist and ideologue tackled the idea of linguistic "corruption." Ber Borokhov (1881–1917) was the leading thinker of Marxist Zionism before the First World War, yet he also supported the Yiddishist movement. He was born in Russia, spent several years in Berlin and Vienna, and was well acquainted with German socialist thought and with German philological scholarship. In 1913

he published a programmatic essay titled "The Tasks of Yiddish Philology." There, he leveled his concerns over the absence of a nationally oriented Yiddish philological edifice. Borokhov hoped that once the field of Yiddish philology is established, it would provide tools for analyzing systematically the Yiddish language, and thus contribute to the realization of Jewish nationalist claims and to the formation of a national culture: "It is a sign of our people's poverty that we have no national philology and no institutions dedicated to national philology."<sup>56</sup> The philological perspective was of crucial importance for Borokhov not only for the ideological boost it might have; it also bore on how Yiddish would be understood from a scientific point of view. Scholars of Yiddish, according to Borokhov, had thus far sought "to prove that Yiddish is a genuine German dialect and that Jews are the bearers of German culture in Slavic countries."<sup>57</sup> Driven by assimilationist tendencies, scholars failed to see Yiddish as a language in its own right.<sup>58</sup> The "prejudices against Yiddish" therefore continued to leave their imprint on the scholarly study of Yiddish.

When referring to the actual issue of the Germanic roots of Yiddish, Borokhov conceded that "Yiddish consists mostly of Germanic words, and almost all its forms are Germanic." At the same time, its syntax was predominantly Semitic, and it had also absorbed words and forms from Slavic and other languages. Yiddish was in this respect a "fused language." Similar to Mieses, he emphasized that, if examined in comparison with other languages, Yiddish should by no means be seen as an exception: all languages are to some degree fused, and there was no "truly pure language in existence worldwide." What is more, "there are beautiful, mighty languages that are more mixed than Yiddish; none, however, is called 'a dirty jargon.'"<sup>59</sup> After probing the "jargon" label and determining that Yiddish was a language, Borokhov delved into the claim that Yiddish was a "corrupted" form of German. To debunk this claim, Borokhov argued that placing Yiddish next to standard High German taught in German schools was a false comparison, because "Yiddish is older than the language that our 'intellectuals' consider to be proper German; it is, indeed, three or four hundred years older." From this angle, it became clear to Borokhov that "Schiller's and Goethe's German is not the *stepfather* of Yiddish, but its *stepbrother*, and even a young stepbrother."<sup>60</sup>

For Borokhov, comparing literary German to Yiddish was misleading and analytically futile given that Yiddish had acquired its traits long before

German emerged as a literary language and came to be known as “pure German.” This point led him to stress the absurdity of using the term “corruption” for denoting the linguistic relation between German and Yiddish: “Both are derived from Middle High German, and both are ‘corrupted.’ Yiddish was ‘corrupted’ by Hebrew and Slavic influences; modern German by Latin and French influences, Yiddish became ‘corrupted’ in the marketplace and in the Yeshiva; German in the universities and the bureaucratic chancelleries.”<sup>61</sup> By juxtaposing the transformation of both languages, Borokhov’s comparison intended to expose the political load of the idea of linguistic corruption.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, and similar to Mises, while Borokhov called for developing a nationally oriented Yiddish philology, he considered it urgent to deflate the power of the common conceptions of what Yiddish is, and in particular of its relation to German. Indeed, Borokhov’s article showed that it would be impossible to emancipate Yiddish from its German pedigree without addressing the ideologically fraught terms and ideas utilized by anti-Yiddishists. Tellingly, both Mises and Borokhov found it necessary not only to release Yiddish from a Germanic frame of reference but also to apply the very categories of anti-Yiddishism to the German language. Arguing that German was in itself a mixed dialect, as Mises did, and that German had undergone a process of “corruption,” as Borokhov did, served the two in employing a rhetorical device in a manner that also addressed a historical injustice. In their respective intellectual efforts, German appeared to be a language that had been associated falsely with the idea of linguistic purity.

### The Presence of Modern German in Yiddish

When Borokhov set out to delineate the contours of how German the Yiddish language is, his purpose was also to address a pressing problem that had been preoccupying Yiddishists since the late nineteenth century and that drew growing attention in the interwar period: the abundance of words and terms from *modern* German in contemporary Yiddish literature and press.<sup>63</sup> Called in Yiddish *daytshmerish* (i.e., writing using Germanisms), this term signified the growing tendency of Yiddish writers to actively broaden Yiddish terminology and make it sound more European by borrowing intensively from contemporary German. The origins of this form of Yiddish style were closely related to efforts of nineteenth-century Yiddish maskilim to

develop a modern and elegant style for Yiddish literature. Borokhov blamed in particular “our intelligentsia” for seeking to purify and “correct” Yiddish, “and correcting meant, of course, germanizing.”<sup>64</sup> A submission to the “German allure,” as scholar Robert Adler Peckerar calls it, often drew writers to embellish their Yiddish by relying more heavily on contemporary German. This tendency would continue to attract Yiddish novelists, journalists, playwrights, and poets.<sup>65</sup>

The case of Yiddish and its German features was fraught with additional political questions. Writers who “Germanized” the Yiddish language were not only maskilim but also intellectuals and activists who engaged with other ideological discourses, particularly socialism. In adopting socialist terminology and acquiring stylistic forms of the debates taking place in the socialist press, Yiddish-speaking socialists also contributed to the “Germanization” of modern Yiddish in the domain of political writing. This was also one of the arguments raised in 1912 by the Yiddish essayist Shmuel Charney.<sup>66</sup> He described *daytshmerish* as “neither Yiddish nor German. It reflects the provincial disdain for Yiddish on the one hand, and the even more provincial respect to German, on the other hand.”<sup>67</sup> *Daytshmerish* was in this sense the product of a classical notion according to which it was impossible to speak of “high matters”—and particularly of ideological topics—in plain Yiddish. The problem with this approach, according to Charney, lay in the fact that such modern German words were transplanted onto Yiddish and did not reflect the more organic way in which words circulated and evolved in ordinary people’s speech. There was nothing essentially wrong with absorbing influences from other languages through constant use, but writers should not enhance the tendency proactively. Certain Yiddish writers, such as the nineteenth-century Yiddish novelist Ayzik Meyer Dik, took it upon themselves to revise the tongue, even though other Yiddish writers, such as Mendele Moykher-Sforim, have shown how it was perfectly possible to use Yiddish for all matters, high and low.<sup>68</sup> According to Charney, popular scientific and scholarly writing in Yiddish, particularly that which was produced in the United States, had also been characterized by a style which would seem abnormal for the majority of Yiddish speakers.

Charney thus believed that the problem of *daytshmerish* reflected a tension between the Yiddish spoken by the people and the Yiddish of certain



intellectuals, whose biases led them to adopt modern German words excessively in their Yiddish writings. In this respect, Charney's position, which was then echoed by Borokhov, postulated that the Middle High German elements in common Yiddish were no longer German, because they had gradually become an integral part of the Yiddish language and could be considered Jewish. Modern influences, however, could not be seen as inherent to Yiddish. In this respect, *daytshmerish* also mirrored the preoccupation of modern Yiddishists' with the definition and boundaries of Yiddish. According to a common view among Yiddishists, Middle High German affected Yiddish as a spoken language, whereas High German's influence occurred chiefly through written language.<sup>69</sup> These questions were tackled in a debate between two of the leading socialist thinkers of Jewish nationalism, Nahman Syrkin and Haim Zhitlowsky.<sup>70</sup> Both were prolific Yiddish writers, but Syrkin was also a staunch Hebraist and Zionist. In 1923, Syrkin published two articles in the Yiddish-American journal *Dos naye lebn*. His main argument was that the relationship between Jewish national culture and national language was absolute, and it was only in the Hebrew language that Jews had been able to reach the heights of their poetic and religious sentiments. Yiddish, like other Jewish dialects, was therefore not likely to resist the pressure from Hebrew, on the one hand, and from European languages, on the other hand.

Syrkin emphasized in his article the depth of the relationship between Yiddish and German. In its earliest days, Yiddish was entirely German. In its "classical" period, it had undergone radical Hebraization, but now, "as Yiddish seeks to become a cultural language, it again becomes more German. It is essentially German with torn wings."<sup>71</sup> If Yiddish was to become more standardized, following a uniform set of laws, it would inevitably follow the German model to achieve this goal. Syrkin dwelled on this point to convey that Yiddish could not be seen as a stable carrier of Jewish national consciousness and creativity, or as a language with its own internal grammatical logic; Yiddish was by its very nature drawn to German. To substantiate this point, Syrkin quoted segments from Zhitlowsky's writings and then translated them into German, showing how, in his view, the differences between the two versions were insignificant.

Zhitlowsky, who was also the coeditor (alongside Shmuel Charney) of *Dos naye lebn*, responded in two articles of his own. He blamed Syrkin for

promoting “mystical Hebraism,” assuming Hebrew’s superiority regardless of the actual reality. And the reality was that ten million Jews worldwide were speaking, reading, and writing in Yiddish, whereas only a few thousand Jews were speaking Hebrew in Palestine, and even there, he added, “not in a free or organic manner.”<sup>72</sup> According to Zhitlowsky, Syrkin’s confusion between form (language) and content also reflected his confusion between a people’s culture and its national consciousness. While many peoples, such as the Armenian or the Czech, have changed their languages, this did not imply that they have abandoned their national consciousness, and there was no reason to think that Yiddish speakers were at a greater distance from Jewish nationhood just because they did not speak or cherish Hebrew.

Responding in detail to Syrkin’s accusations of Yiddish as being essentially dependent on German, Zhitlowsky claimed that Syrkin went against a growing consensus among philologists and linguists that the distinction between a language and a jargon was artificial, and, indeed, that all languages could be seen as jargons. Zhitlowsky also rejected Syrkin’s prediction that in its process of standardization, Yiddish would inevitably become more German. This, for Zhitlowsky, was not how Yiddish speakers were thinking about their language or how they were using it. German did not serve as the barometer for speaking Yiddish. Indeed, he asked rhetorically, “How exactly are the people and the intelligentsia supposed to know what is this German grammatical order to which they are allegedly aspiring?”<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the bulk of the German presence in Yiddish came from Middle High German, not High German, and the rules of the two languages were different. In this respect, too, the Yiddish-as-German argument conflated temporalities and forms of influence. Zhitlowsky did, however, concede that *daytshmerish* was leaving its mark on journalistic Yiddish. The reason for that, according to Zhitlowsky, “has to do with the fact that many among the current generation of the Yiddish intelligentsia, in particular journalists, have been trained in the German language.” However, journalists are not those who broaden and define the language, but rather artists and poets who are more attentive to the language of the people, “and there is no doubt that in their contemporary work, the clear tendency is to move *away* from German.”<sup>74</sup>

Zhitlowsky turned to a concise, linguistic rebuttal of Syrkin’s thesis concerning the Germanness of Yiddish, bringing up various pieces of evidence:

that Hebrew's presence in Yiddish was in fact substantial, encompassing around six thousand words; that Yiddish includes Middle High German words that are in fact not at all in use in High German; that the semantic meaning of German words in Yiddish is very often different from their meaning in High German; that in their process of absorption into Yiddish, most German words have undergone a change in their shape, and the type of that change is often consistent and follows the Yiddish language's internal logic; and that the Yiddish syntax is not similar to the German one, and, in fact, is closer to Hebrew syntax.

Zhitlowsky then set out to refute Syrkin's accusation by pursuing different directions, referring to Old Yiddish, to its modernization processes, and to the present state of Yiddish. By doing so, Zhitlowsky had to maneuver between different narratives of the development of Yiddish: Yiddish used to be German but not the German spoken at present; Yiddish used to be German, but it since acquired features that made it a different language; Yiddish was not German because it had its own internal rules and logic, like other languages; Yiddish was a mixed language, but its grammatical features brought it closer to Hebrew than to German; and last, German permeated contemporary Yiddish, but this was a passing phenomenon that did not reflect on the Yiddish language as such.

There was an inner tension in Zhitlowsky's counterarguments. On the one hand, he tried to argue that the evidence of the Yiddish-as-German thesis was ultimately circumstantial, not essential. Put differently, that Yiddish had absorbed influences from German, but these did not in the least mean that Yiddish was a German dialect or that its relation to German bore on its linguistic characteristics. For Zhitlowsky, the distance between Yiddish and German could be compared to the relationship between English and German, or between Romanian and Latin. On the other hand, Zhitlowsky's rejection of Syrkin's thesis did not prevent him from arguing that Yiddish was influenced substantially by Hebrew. By doing this, he accepted a latent principle underlying Syrkin's criticism, namely that a linguistic scrutiny of the lineage of Yiddish was necessary to determine how German it was, and that the results of this scrutiny should be a factor in determining the political status of Yiddish at present.

On the one hand, then, Zhitlowsky seemed to master the history of the Yiddish language and the current linguistic research better than Syrkin. Moreover, Zhitlowsky succeeded in refuting many of Syrkin's assumptions by showing how they drew on nonempirical and even mystical ideas. On the other hand, Zhitlowsky was unable to address the subtext of the argument concerning Yiddish-as-German. This argument had to do not merely with the fact that Yiddish was not an independent language, but, more important, that its history had been closely entwined with the history of the German language. This proximity, according to this argument, instilled in Yiddish speakers a sense of attraction to German. The major critique Zhitlowsky had to defend was not linguistic per se but rather had to do with a deeper tension of Jewish history as a diasporic religious and national minority. It was by framing the debate as having to do with political and cultural submission—and not merely linguistic submission—that Hebraists such as Syrkin could divert the quarrel from demographic and sociological factors favoring Yiddish.

The issue of *daytshmerish* was debated intensely during the late 1930s.<sup>75</sup> In 1938, Jewish diaspora nationalist Noah Prylucki wrote an article in which he decried the “jargonization of Yiddish,” namely the retreat of Yiddish from its core features in favor of other languages—Polish, Russian, and German. He identified an intensification of this process in the wake of the Great War but found a stream of continuity between the *daytshmerish* of the Haskalah and its political heirs, namely socialist and Zionist movements, who used Yiddish in German-leaning ways.<sup>76</sup>

A few months later, Max Weinreich, one of the founders of YIVO, published an article with a more programmatic agenda to combat *daytshmerish*.<sup>77</sup> Under the title “Daytshmerish Is Not Suitable,” he described the present state of Yiddish as one in which *daytshmerish* continued to be a major problem, bringing forms of “forbidden mixing” (*sha'atnez*) into the Yiddish tongue. He believed that words that did not sound natural in Yiddish or were not deeply rooted in the Yiddish public sphere should be avoided. Weinreich also offered several ways to avoid them, for instance by coining neologisms based on international terms deriving from Greek and Latin, or by restoring older Yiddish words that were no longer in use. As Amy Blau has pointed

out, Weinreich's approach was that German words are legitimate only if they had already belonged to the Yiddish language in its common use, unlike Charney's approach, which allowed a process of slow historical assimilation of words.<sup>78</sup>

In a response to Weinreich's article, Noah Prylucki criticized him for relying on nonscholarly, chiefly emotional categories for discerning which German words were legitimate and which were not. In fact, Prylucki argued, there was no generally accepted definition of *daytshmerish*.<sup>79</sup> Weinreich's reliance on subjective considerations on the one hand, and on anti-*daytshmerish* notions on the other hand, led him to lose much of the scientific drive that had been the bedrock of YIVO and its journal, *Yidish far ale*, where the debate took place. Instead of looking at the degree of Germanness in a given word as a reference, one should take the Yiddish language itself as the point of departure for examining *daytshmerish*. Scholars needed to inquire into the actual use of words in the history of Yiddish and to determine whether it could be seen as foreign to Yiddish or not. He asked to draw the readers' attention to the fact that the problem of *daytshmerish* was often pursued in a manner that touched on "other problems of Yiddish culture," or indeed was tightly bound up with them, such as the question of the status of Yiddish as a dialect.<sup>80</sup> This article asked, then, to restore the scientific nature of the problem of *daytshmerish*, to prevent it from becoming a rhetorical instrument. At the same time, given the longer sensitivities around the German influence on Yiddish language and culture—of which Prylucki was profoundly aware—it was not clear whether this question could be neutralized of its ideological values.

In the same volume of *Yidish far ale* Zelig Kalmanovich, who was also active at YIVO, put forth the claim that the emotional dimension was bound up with any critical engagement with *daytshmerish* and was not merely a redundant aspect of it.<sup>81</sup> Referring to the numerous words stemming from Middle High German in Yiddish, Kalmanovich wrote that the words "go into our Yiddish soul, they have gained both a different sound and a different meaning, becoming a source of emotions for Jews, entangled through associations with other words, such that exist only in Yiddish and consequently have become distinct."<sup>82</sup> *Daytshmerish* words, however, belonged strictly to the German linguistic world, carrying "*their own* connotations, *their own* psychic

functions, their *German* inner linguistic shape." In Yiddish, such words failed to stir any emotion, having not acquired any Yiddish linguistic shape: "They are therefore entirely foreign, despite their externally familiar appearance."

When discussing why Yiddish speakers and writers renounced the rich resources of their own language and chose instead to borrow words from German, Kalmanovich argued that behind this there lay a "cold fact," namely that among a segment of Yiddish speakers, there emerged a tendency to "run away from Yiddish." This, in Kalmanovich's view, was where the roots of *daytshmerish* lay. His turn to emotional-psychological explanations of *daytshmerish* was thus twofold: first, by grounding his opposition to *daytshmerish* on the criterion that they did not sound right to the Yiddish speaker; second, by identifying a certain mind-set among Yiddish speakers that induced them to see their own language as a barrier, a ghetto, something from which one wishes to escape. As a recourse to that predicament of linguistic self-abnegation, Germanisms became a way out of their own language. While ultimately a debate on matters of style and linguistic uniformity, the *daytshmerish* controversy touched on more fundamental questions for Jewish nationalists in the twentieth century, pertaining to the contact between Jewish and non-Jewish societies, and particularly to the language of Ashkenazi Jewry and its multilayered interaction with German.

### German and Yiddish in the Zionist Congress

The debates about *daytshmerish* and the linguistic roots of Yiddish often drew on differing understandings of what "German" actually was. To examine the political overtones of this question, let us return to the Zionist Congress. Both participants and reporters frequently referred, sometimes half-humorously, to the prevailing language of the congress as *Kongressdeutsch*, a form of "yiddishized German," or perhaps "Germanized Yiddish," which served as a surrogate language in the congress's Babel-like setting. Heinrich Loewe asserted that *Kongressdeutsch* "was extremely close to High German."<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, some historians asserted that *Kongressdeutsch* was essentially Yiddish, or "a highly Germanized form of Yiddish" invented by Eastern European delegates.<sup>84</sup>

*Kongressdeutsch* was not confined to the Zionist congress. The Jewish Committee to the Paris Peace Conference faced similar difficulties of

communication. In the Chicago journal the *Sentinel* it was reported: "It soon became apparent that practically all spoke some sort of a Yiddish-German," which led Nahum Sokolow to determine that the debates would be held in "Congress-Deutsch."<sup>85</sup> A reporter for the English section of the Yiddish periodical *Forverts* from the 1929 Zionist Congress depicted "the Famous 'Congress-Deutsch,' which is mostly Yiddish intoned with a broad 'a.'"<sup>86</sup> According to Yiddish scholar Nathan Süsskind, *Kongressdeutsch* was nothing but the recent manifestation of a common phenomenon of Jews attempting to speak in German while, in fact, speaking Yiddish.<sup>87</sup> By the same token, Yiddish linguist Yudl Mark placed *Kongressdeutsch* within a longer tradition of attempts to "refine" Yiddish and bring it closer to "proper" German, otherwise known as *daytshmerish*.<sup>88</sup>

The Russian delegate Mordechai Ben-Hillel Hacohen recalled how his compatriots could not participate in the first congress's discussions due to the language barrier. Only in the following years, after acquiring *Kongressdeutsch*, could they engage in the discussions.<sup>89</sup> From this remark, it seems that *Kongressdeutsch* was indeed closer to German. Chaim Weizmann wrote that "every Jew thought he knew German very well, but Herzl's German was not *Kongressdeutsch*,"<sup>90</sup> hence strengthening the view that *Kongressdeutsch* meant simple, unembellished German. In a Yiddish journal from 1927, a commentator criticized the fact that "Kongressdeutsch reigns over the podium." He referred to it as essentially a German language that "places a veil between contemporary Jewish reality and those who wish to understand this reality." Tapping his critique into broader tensions in the Zionist movement, the columnist stated that "owing to Kongressdeutsch, the Zionist idea, which is so simple and clear to every Jew, has recently become so blurry, with all sorts of programs and sub-programs in which the ordinary Jew cannot orientate himself."<sup>91</sup> *Kongressdeutsch* appeared in this context as a vehicle of tedious and bureaucratic modes of expression. We encounter here, then, the trope that had circulated already in the nineteenth century, according to which it was not merely the language gap between different groups within Jewish nationalism that was problematic but specifically the use of German that did much to obscure and create barriers between the Eastern European Jewish masses and their political leadership. *Kongressdeutsch*, so the argument goes, generated this linguistic and ideological gap. According to a percep-

tive definition of an American Jewish journalist, a self-proclaimed speaker of *Kongressdeutsch*, it was “neither German nor Yiddish but a rather interesting conflict between the two.”<sup>92</sup>

The different views indicate how, depending on the point of view of the speaker, *Kongressdeutsch* could mean German, or Yiddish, or both, or none. It could serve as a means of communication and of miscommunication. For Yiddish speakers, *Kongressdeutsch* embodied the extent to which Yiddish could be modified so as to maximally approximate German. For German speakers, *Kongressdeutsch* embodied the extent to which German could be simplified, so as to be comprehensible to Yiddish speakers. In both forms, *Kongressdeutsch* was not a clear linguistic entity but a discursive site of interaction between the speakers of these languages. The fact that *Kongressdeutsch* could not be easily defined was one of its main sources of practicality, allowing participants of the congress to transcend some of the political sensitivities involved in making a language choice.

Hitler’s rise of power and its impact on the status of the German language—discussed in the following chapter—led to a decline in the role of German and of *Kongressdeutsch* in the congress. In a column on the Zionist Congress of 1933, a Lithuanian Yiddish diaspora nationalist periodical noted that following Hitler’s barbarous attacks on German Jews, one good thing happened: Zionists have abandoned the awkward and much-ridiculed *Kongressdeutsch*.<sup>93</sup> As German was heard less and less in the congress sessions, it was not only Hebrew but also Yiddish that reemerged and gained temporary legitimacy as an alternative to German. A Chicago-based Yiddish periodical declared: “Kongressdeutsch is no more. [Only] Hebrew and Yiddish are spoken.” It then added that even delegates who had previously spoken *Kongressdeutsch* were speaking in Yiddish.<sup>94</sup> That said, such reports should be taken with a pinch of salt, not least because the question of how to describe the linguistic practice of the congress was, more often than not, a matter of perspective, as was the distinction between German and Yiddish. For Jewish nationalists, the German language and its relation to Yiddish was a political issue through which they could tackle various ideological tensions—old and new ones.



## THE LANGUAGE OF GOETHE AND HITLER

It is characteristic of authoritarian regimes to actively transform the way language is used. Nazi Germany was no exception, although the intensity of this process in the Third Reich was extreme. At an ideological level, the Nazi regime endorsed racial-linguistic nationalism, centered on the bond between “Aryan” Germans and their language.<sup>1</sup> At a more practical level, the Nazi regime developed a powerful apparatus dedicated to the dissemination of Nazi principles by redesigning the public sphere as a realm in which the party’s line was constantly heard. Through skilled use of modern media and endless repetition of messages in schools, workplaces, movies, rallies and other venues, Nazi Germany rapidly transformed the common meaning of German words. Fused with its militaristic and violent rhetoric, Nazis relied heavily on technical, scientific, and bureaucratic terminologies. One of the purposes behind the use of these terminologies was to conceal, or at least blur, some of Germany’s genocidal policies against Jews. The term “Final Solution” (*Endlösung*) is a clear example of such conduct.<sup>2</sup>

In occupied countries, and particularly in ghettos and concentration camps, German’s role as the language of the oppressor had a strong impact on the subjugated populations.<sup>3</sup> In Auschwitz, as Primo Levi noted, “knowing German meant life.” It provided inmates minimal leeway by allowing them to follow the orders of the German commanders and prevent punishment and death that resulted from incomprehension.<sup>4</sup> Various German

words became common currency even among those who did not speak the language. Oskar Singer, a Prague Jew who was deported to the Lodz ghetto, described in July 1942 how a Jewish crowd in the ghetto listening to a German order “could hear only fragments: ‘Arbeiter—Posen—Güterbahnhof—Entlaufen—Geheime Staatspolizei—Todesurteil.’ The crowd understands it.”<sup>5</sup> After the war, Germans and Jews published studies, essays, and lexicons exploring different dimensions of the Nazi language.<sup>6</sup> The association between German and Nazism reverberated across the world, though in particular in countries that had been under Nazi rule. In Israel and in the Jewish world, German figured in public discourses as a language that embodied Nazi brutality, echoing the bestial shouts of German officers and enthusiastic antisemites.<sup>7</sup>

This, however, is not the entire story of how the German language became associated with Nazism in Jewish historical memory. In what follows, I show that the sensitivities around German and its Nazification were part of a longer history of grappling with the German language and its place in Jewish history. After 1933, Jewish nationalist activists, reporters, and intellectuals engaged in different ways with the symbolic and actual significance of German: as a language that many Jews were continuously using in Palestine and elsewhere; as a language that reflected Nazi ways of thinking; and as a language whose sound evoked chilling memories of the destruction of European Jewry. German had long been a polemical vehicle in Jewish political quarrels, but the Nazification of German rendered it particularly instrumental for making political claims. This chapter treats separately the realm of using, hearing, and thinking in German. It shows how the engagement of Jewish nationalists with the German language and with its meanings was tied up with broader political concerns underlying the attempts to establish Jewish national sovereignty.

### The Problem of Using German

Using German was rarely a neutral act in Jewish political affairs. However, German’s functional merit guaranteed its steady presence in the Jewish public sphere. The claim for the legitimacy and respectability of German, however, lost its effectiveness after the rise of the Third Reich. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem discontinued in 1934 the instruction of the German

language.<sup>8</sup> The gradual disappearance of German from the Zionist Congress during the 1930s further attested to the changing status of German. In his opening speech as the president of the Zionist movement in the congress held in Prague in August 1933, Nahum Sokolow started by speaking in Hebrew, and then announced that his next words would be in “the preferred international language of politics,” French.<sup>9</sup> This linguistic choice, uncommon until then in the Zionist Congress, had to do, according to one contemporary report, with the “negative approach” of the hosting country, Czechoslovakia, to the German language.<sup>10</sup> The relatively marginal place of Hebrew in the rest of the congress debates generated stronger reactions than in previous years. An American delegate spoke forcefully on what he described as the “shameful absence” of Hebrew from the proceedings of the congress, and on the fact that the stenographic protocols were printed in German.<sup>11</sup> The Hebrew writer Abraham Levinson called Hebrew’s inferior position in the movement a “sad tradition.”<sup>12</sup>

In the 1935 congress, held in Lucerne, “Hebrew became the official language in practice as well as in theory,” as Israel Cohen put it.<sup>13</sup> However, the protocols of the congress continued to indicate that many speeches were delivered in other languages as well. One participant in the 1937 congress wrote with evident frustration that after the positive steps made in the attempts to turn the congress into a Hebrew-speaking venue, in the latest congress “Hebrew was relegated to a disgraceful and shameful position,” with two languages reigning supreme: Yiddish and English, followed by German. He also pointed out blatant mistranslations in the German version of Hebrew speeches in the congress’s bulletin, proof that the movement continued to be run by German-speaking functionaries who were ignorant of Hebrew.<sup>14</sup> In his Yiddish speech in 1935, the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Jewish Agency in Palestine, David Ben-Gurion, proclaimed, “We do not want a ghetto, nor a cultural babel, as the one we are encountering here in this congress, where even delegates from Palestine are bound to speak in a foreign tongue.”<sup>15</sup> Ben-Gurion continued to deliver his speeches in the next congresses in Yiddish.<sup>16</sup> Until 1939, some members gave their speeches in German, but it was no longer the main language. Beginning in 1937, the protocols were printed in Hebrew only. The history of German as a Zionist *lingua franca* came to an end.

From 1933, the Yishuv in Palestine saw the arrival of about seventy thousand Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria (the Fifth Aliyah), most of whom lacking a working knowledge of Hebrew. German adults in particular, while seeking to find their place in a new environment, continued to use their native language in the streets, literary publications, intellectual and political events, and newspapers.<sup>17</sup> Jews escaping Hitler's Germany were received with mixed sentiments by the established segments of the Yishuv. While the incoming immigrants enhanced the Yishuv's size, boosted its economy, and included a significant number of highly educated individuals, the immigrants were often portrayed in the Yishuv's public sphere as profoundly rooted in German culture and as remote from Zionist ideas. According to a common allegation, they were the group of immigrants most resistant to adopting the Hebrew language.<sup>18</sup> In May 1933, the Zionist activist Eliazar Yaffe described the incoming immigration as "a great danger to our revival movement, stemming from 'Hitler's Zionists' . . . ; they might settle in their own neighborhoods, conducting the lives they had had in the "Vaterland" that threw them away . . . , and they might indeed establish German schools, publish German newspapers, and preach for assimilation."<sup>19</sup>

It was not a groundless assumption that German immigrants' general lack of familiarity with Hebrew would affect their integration. Yet the terms with which this issue was depicted frequently echoed ideas of German Jews as clinging stubbornly to anything German, as entirely indifferent to Jewish national self-determination. City councils, cultural institutions, and activist groups routinely fought the use of all languages other than Hebrew in the public sphere. However, the arguments leveled against German-speakers carried a discernible degree of antipathy toward German, one rooted in the loaded place of German in Jewish history.

For instance, a recurring motif in reports on the use of German in the Yishuv was the invocation of the fact that it was the language used by Nazis. In August 1933, nearly seven months after the Nazi party took power, a Revisionist newspaper reported that Richard Kaufmann, the chief architect of the Jewish National Fund who had immigrated to Palestine in 1920, had sent a letter to a union in Haifa concerning a construction project. Kaufmann's letter, the newspaper reported, "prefers Hitler's language to our own language."<sup>20</sup> One year later, in a meeting organized in Jerusalem by the orthodox

party Agudat Israel, a school principal who promoted the use of Hebrew began his talk by stating that, because of the immigrants in the audience who did not understand Hebrew, he would speak in German. Upon beginning his talk some voices from the audience shouted, “Hebrew, Hebrew!” whereas others, according to a reporter of the newspaper *Davar*, “shouted that they don’t understand German, the language of Hitler, and a disturbance nearly erupted.” The speaker delivered the rest of his speech in Yiddish.<sup>21</sup> Some of those opposing the use of German were quick to instrumentalize Hitler’s rise to power to discredit the use of German, adding to this linguistic choice a whiff of treason. This rhetorical device would be used increasingly in the months before the outbreak of the war.<sup>22</sup>

In 1935, the right-wing Hebrew newspaper *Do’ar Hayom* published an essay that admitted that the monolingual aspiration of Hebraism had failed to materialize. “Walk in the streets of our land, and especially in Jerusalem, and you will hear an unwarranted mixture of tongues . . . , Jerusalem is becoming a metropole, and the road from a metropolitan city to a cosmopolitan city is very short.” The reporter counted the different languages he could hear on the bus from Haifa to Jerusalem (Hebrew, Arabic, English, and German), and added a warning: “I believe that through the spoken and publicly-*read* German the Yiddish language will sneak into our camp. From within the walls of spoken German in this land I can smell the scent of Yiddish.” In Haifa, in particular, “the sound of the language of Hitler is heard in all its accents.”<sup>23</sup>

The author wrapped Yiddish together with German, suggesting that the linguistic affinity had detrimental consequences insofar as it allowed Yiddish to undermine the Hebraist efforts in Palestine. Implicitly, German’s becoming the language of Hitler served Hebraists who could remind the public that Yiddish had Germanic roots, and as such was the language of the Jews’ bitter enemy. The Yiddish-as-German argument presented in the previous chapter received, then, an ideological boost after 1933. As Aryeh Pilowsky has shown, during the Second World War grassroots organizations devoted to oppressing (often violently) the presence of foreign languages in the Yishuv’s public sphere targeted not only Yiddish newspapers and meetings but also German publications, in particular in Haifa, where large numbers of German Jewish immigrants settled after 1933. Activists devoted to removing Yiddish

and other languages from the streets disrupted lectures in the German language, threatened distributors of German and Yiddish press, and vandalized stalls selling periodicals in “foreign” languages.<sup>24</sup> In this setting, the fate of Yiddish and German became closer than ever before.

Consider, for instance, the following report in *Davar* (the official newspaper of Mapai, the leading party in the Yishuv) from March 1939. An essayist described how, upon arriving in Tel Aviv, “the first impression you get is that it’s a German-speaking city . . . but this German is *Kauderwelsch* [in German: gibberish], a mixture of dialects and distortions that indicate that the speakers are not ‘Germans,’ but rather speakers of ‘mame-loshn’ [Yiddish]. However, an impulse of silliness has entered their spirit, and they all chatter in German.” Describing a mixture of German immigrants and Yiddish speakers who are keen to answer in High German to any Hebrew inquiry, the impression emerging from this article is of a linguistic sin city. The author concluded with the call: “Dear God, cure us from the big Hitler in Berlin, and the little Hitler in the mouths of my brethren in Tel Aviv.”<sup>25</sup> The author used an old trope of Yiddish as a clownish, “carnavalesque language”—but applied it handily to German. Hitler’s German and the Yiddish speakers appeared to be caught up in a web of historical and linguistic connections that emerged saliently in Tel Aviv.

German immigrants encountering such allegations responded in several ways. In the bulletin of the Association of German Immigrants, columnists and letters to the editor frequently addressed the ongoing attack on German Jews’ linguistic habits. One commentator stated, “No Aliyah has made greater efforts to learn Hebrew, nor with similar zeal, energy, and diligence, than the German Aliyah.” Nonetheless, he wrote, German immigrants are being reproached for acquiring Hebrew too slowly. The writer saw it as a hypocrisy that such claims were not raised to the same degree against Yiddish, which was significantly more prevalent. “It is no coincidence that Arab merchants selling fruits and vegetables on the streets of Tel Aviv call and bargain in Yiddish,” in what indicated the superior role of Yiddish in the public sphere.<sup>26</sup> Another commentator noted that German served an important function in the multilingual setting of the Yishuv, given that “German is the language understood by most Jews around the world. It is the Esperanto of the first generation of Jewish migrants arriving in Palestine from different

parts of the world.” As long as the process of Hebraization had not been completed, German had an important role.<sup>27</sup> A different view was brought forth by a commentator who, in 1938, argued that the practical necessity of German-language periodicals for newly arrived immigrants was understandable, yet the continuous existence of five different periodicals in German was an alarming phenomenon. The article posited that this diversity of German-language periodicals discouraged German immigrants from immersing in Hebrew and advancing the cause of Jewish nationalism: “A Jew who does not speak Hebrew lacks not only a vital connection to Palestine, but he becomes a blank space in the arduously established edifice of Hebrew culture.”<sup>28</sup>

In *Orient*, a leftist, non-Zionist German-language periodical edited by Arnold Zweig and Wolfgang Yourgrau, an unapologetic article penned in 1942 by Walter Zadek stated that the “language problem” was, ultimately, a sham. “The chauvinists use it happily for political attacks.” In reality, Zadek added, there was no language problem: those who were attacked indeed spoke German, but their children spoke Hebrew. The language fanaticism in Palestine, like in other parts of the world, was merely a “patriotic façade behind which lurk economic and political interests.”<sup>29</sup> The newspaper ceased operating in April 1943, after a bomb destroyed the printing house in which *Orient* and another popular German newspaper were printed. The perpetrators were never caught.

Within the Hebrew literary sphere, a counterargument to anti-German rhetoric appeared in *Davar* in January 1940. Dov Sadan, the editor of the literary supplement, opposed the argument that “German is the language of our enemy.” He wondered whether this fact should matter at all from the Hebraist perspective, given that English and French, which were by no means the languages of the enemy, were equally problematic for anyone seeking to promote Hebrew culture and language in Palestine. Moreover, Sadan reminded his readers that German was a language in which generations of writers, poets, and seekers of freedom had expressed their thoughts. German, Sadan stated, “is the language of Kant and Hegel, without which our present thought is inconceivable; it is also the language of Schiller and Goethe, without which our present poetry is inconceivable; it is the language of defenders of truth and humanists, and lovers of Israel in particular, from Lessing to Thomas Mann; and it is also the language of our own—of Börne and Heine,

of Lassalle and Hess, of Zunz and Graetz, of Herzl and Nordau, of Freud and Einstein."<sup>30</sup> Sadan also refused to see Hitler as representing *all* Germans. He noted that there were Germans who had to "clench their teeth," who were fighting in the underground, and who were suffering in concentration camps because of their resistance to the Nazis. German was their language, too, Sadan noted.<sup>31</sup>

The fact that an editor in the leading party's periodical chose to confront the anti-German rhetoric in a detailed manner indicated a certain prevalence of negative attitudes toward German, even if it remains difficult to determine how common they were. Indeed, the examples presented here suggest that after 1933 Hebraists of different political orientations took up the idea of German as the language of Hitler to advance their cause. This is not to say that the rise of Nazism did not have a genuine shocking impact on Jews in Palestine and elsewhere, turning German into a language that was linked with Nazi brutality. However, the affective response cannot fully explain the immediate appearance of the equation between Hitler and Germany, or its integration with earlier discursive legacies concerning German's detrimental impact on Jewish society. Associating German with Hitler could thus serve as a polemical vehicle in Jewish nationalists' language quarrels, marking a new stage in efforts to present it as illegitimate for Jews to use German.

After the end of the war and the establishment of the State of Israel, Hebrew's hegemony as the language of the state was consolidated. German was consigned to the private sphere among German-speaking and German-reading Jews. In the realm of official political affairs, however, German remained a delicate matter. This became evident when Israel and West Germany began direct negotiations over the issue of German reparations for the Third Reich's material destruction of Jewish property. The first meeting between West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and an Israeli representative, the Galician-born director general of the Ministry of Finance, David Horowitz, took place in May 1951 in the West German embassy in Paris. It was held in German, "because Adenauer's English was not good enough," as Horowitz noted in his memoir.<sup>32</sup> The ensuing meetings between the two countries' delegations were designed to be held in English, but the fact that the entire Israeli delegation was made up of individuals for whom German was a native tongue ultimately shifted the linguistic choice to German.<sup>33</sup>



In September 1952, an initial agreement was signed between the two governments in Luxembourg. The agreement was written in English. In the signing ceremony, there were no handshakes or speeches. Upon his return to Israel, the Russian-born Israeli foreign minister Moshe Sharett gave a statement concerning the significance of the signed agreement, saying that his conversation with Adenauer revolved around “the abyss that separates the two peoples concerning what happened, and [how] it would take a great deal of time and reeducation of the entire German people.” He added that their conversation was held in German, “but in Goethe’s language, not in Hitler’s language. We both had learned it before Hitler’s rise to power.”<sup>34</sup> Sharett, whose biographical trajectory did not include any substantial period in a German-speaking country, conveyed in this short clarification the historical tension embedded in the language question. The very idea of reconciling with a German government and receiving reparations from West Germany was in itself a far-reaching step that stirred significant protests in Israel. Still, Sharett seems to have been aware that the image of an Israeli politician speaking to a German politician in German might evoke among Israelis a sense of discomfort or anger.

Another example of German’s presence and absence in official Israeli-German contacts appears in a short correspondence that took place while negotiations between Israel and West Germany were under way.<sup>35</sup> Max Horkheimer, a German Jewish philosopher and sociologist, and the cofounder of the Frankfurt School who spent the war years mostly in the United States and who returned to Germany after the war, was then serving as Frankfurt University’s rector. In March 1952, he sent a letter—in German—to Moshe Schwabe, the rector of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who was born in Halle, Germany, acquired a PhD in classical philology in Berlin in 1914, and immigrated to Jerusalem in 1925, where he served as a professor of classical studies.<sup>36</sup> Horkheimer informed Schwabe of an initiative of his university’s student government to “do whatever is in its capacity to create the material and spiritual conditions here in Germany for peace with Israel.”<sup>37</sup> By engaging with churches, universities, and other educational institutions, this group of students sought to combat antisemitism. As part of this initiative, Horkheimer asked Schwabe to consider a gesture in the form of cooperation between the student bodies of the universities: whether by transmitting

books from German libraries to Israel, sending Israeli students to West Germany, or taking other measures that would strengthen positive elements in West-German society seeking to tackle these issues. Horkheimer noted that, in his view, sheer rejection of such constructive steps did almost as little as “irresponsible forgetting” in terms of the conclusions drawn from the events of the past, adding, “Perhaps you will forgive me for this statement in view of the mere fact that my own scientific work does not exactly bear traces of forgetting.”<sup>38</sup>

In August, Moshe Schwabe sent a polite reply—in English—in which he apologized for his delayed response which had resulted, among other things, from the fact that “I wanted . . . to await developments in the negotiations between our two governments.” Schwabe expressed his content with the “change of heart” that had occurred “in a portion of the German population and a segment of the student body.” However, Schwabe noted that, in Israel, “the terrible wounds sustained in the recent past have left scars which will take their time to heal. Almost every European immigrant has lost close relatives and friends at the hands of the Nazis and so, too, have many of our students and teachers.” For this reason, “the time is not yet ripe for suggesting to the university that it make the gesture of peace as advocated by you.” He also suspected that “public opinion here most certainly would not sanction our students’ going to Germany to complete their studies.” It is noteworthy that, despite the fact that Horkheimer and Schwabe shared a native tongue, the latter responded in English.<sup>39</sup> In direct, face-to-face encounters it was hard to ignore the common linguistic backgrounds of German speakers, Jews or non-Jews. In written form, however, the linguistic barrier was generally upheld, confirming the new state of affairs, whereby German, after the Holocaust, could not be recognized as an official vehicle of communication.

### The Problem of Thinking in German

It is one thing to show concern about German’s presence as a spoken and written language in Jewish life. It is quite another to worry about the indirect ways in which German affects those exposed to it. Well before the rise of the Third Reich, German had been associated with various ways of thinking and expressing oneself, be it burdensome bureaucratic expressions, convoluted scholarly rhetoric, dense philosophical style, diplomatic mannerism, poetic

tenderness, and so on.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the perceived coexistence of gentleness and brutality in German had been central to popular images of German. The Nazification of German during the Third Reich departed from certain prevailing images of German but tapped neatly into other ones. Jewish nationalists preoccupied with language questions saw in the transformation of German an alarming phenomenon that raised a number of questions relevant for those promoting Jewish self-government in Palestine: What did it mean to read the German literary and scientific canon after German had been tainted? What was the relation between German political bestiality and its embodiment in language, and how should Jewish nationalists respond to it? These questions were particularly fraught considering that Jewish nationalist thought was conceived to a considerable degree in the German language.

In an article published in 1935, Nahum Sokolow highlighted the power that German language and rhetoric were exerting on Jews in modern history. He also situated the recent Nazification of German within a longer tradition of using syntactical and stylistic potentialities of German to obfuscate listeners and readers.<sup>41</sup> Drawing on an example of a book written by a scholar sympathetic to Nazism, Sokolow pointed to the “plague” of German verbosity that has affected contemporaneous German scholarly writing: “There is no hallucination and no false conception which the German language’s capacity of word-formations is unable to conceal.” Through philosophical, poetic, and pseudoscientific rhetoric, the Nazi use of German took a tradition of linguistic vagueness and quest for power to new extremes.

This, Sokolow noted, was a phenomenon that attracted Jewish listeners and readers as well. Sophistry permeated Jewish audience, who, owing to their superficial knowledge of German, lack of familiarity with other languages, and “hunger for new concepts and polemical forms of expression,” were enchanted by empty speech and consequently introduced it to the Hebrew sphere.<sup>42</sup> Among German Jews, Sokolow added, one could find such linguistic tendencies as well. He gave an example of an article written by a German Jew addressing the plight of “the Jew,” using pompous words and pretentious clichés, “a habit of foreign tongue and phraseology and a typical German way of thought, applied to a Jewish matter that requires a different kind of reasoning: original Jewish and unmediated, simplicity and cleverness with some humor.” Sokolow made clear that the German language was

rich and its literature wide and wonderful, “but one should pay attention to the recent style taking root in the German language, through which it has become possible to justify everything and to prove anything, and also to complicate and turn around everything so that one could read an essay or a book that appears to be eloquently written as a scholarly book, without understanding at all what the author wishes to say.”<sup>43</sup>

As we saw in Chapter 3, already in the 1880s Sokolow had brought forth the argument that the German language entailed a peculiar quality of potentially obfuscating the reader. When revisiting the theme in 1935, Sokolow emphasized that this linguistic trait lent itself to political manipulation, whereby the elegant and sophisticated language enabled the skilled writer to “depict day as night and night as day.” For Sokolow, this posed a danger to Jewish writers who were exposed to German, but it could also serve a cautionary role in their efforts to nourish their own Jewish literary language. Contrary to the German tendency, Jews ought to cling to the tradition of Jewish morality and critique, whose historical task has been “to shatter the gods of words.” Sokolow thus reinforced a perception of a principal divide between the tradition of Hebrew and German ways of thinking.<sup>44</sup>

The potential influence that German exerted on the Hebrew-reading public also figured in political debates on translation. During the war period, writers in the Yishuv debated on a number of occasions the question of whether German literary and political pieces should be translated into Hebrew.<sup>45</sup> In December 1944, this question underlay a major literary scandal: the committee jury of a translation award, sponsored by the city council of Tel Aviv, failed to reach a decision and canceled the prize for that year. It soon turned out that the committee disagreed on whether to award the prize to two new Hebrew editions of Goethe’s *Faust* into Hebrew. The cancellation of the prize was received with both praise and dissent. For those supporting the decision, it confirmed the view that the persecution of Jews by the Third Reich implicated German culture in its entirety. In *Ha-Mashkif*, one writer stipulated that the decision was a sensible one: “German is not only Goethe’s language, but it is also Hitler’s. It is reasonable to have Goethe ‘suffer’ due to Hitler.”<sup>46</sup> In the Religious Zionist periodical *Ha-Tsofe*, Raphael Hasman argued that it was impossible at this age to separate between Goethe and Hitler: “A German with the title of a professor who carries a syringe of poison

in his pocket is able to go from a Beethoven concert to preparing Cyclon tabs for the gas chambers in Majdanek ('Achtung! Für Gebrauch in Osten') or for sifting the organs of dead women and children. . . . Both the people of Goethe and the people of Hitler have built the Majdaneks and Treblinkas."<sup>47</sup> Hasman rejected the idea that an abyss yawned between a "good" Germany and a "bad" Germany. Accordingly, their language did not distinguish the two Germanies. The "enlightened hangmen" have killed Jewish children "using the tongue of Goethe." Yet another writer asserted that for persons of Jewish descent to "be able to enjoy the creativity of the German nation, whether in word, sound, or color—this is a clear sign of a certain flaw in their soul."<sup>48</sup> Immigrants from Germany and Austria should likewise be expected to "uproot their fondness for this damned nation and its culture, to expel its language from their mouths, to remove its authors from their bookshelves, to detest its poetry."

Another columnist questioned the "awkward" muse that befell two translators, inspiring them to translate Goethe's *Faust* while Hitler's country was killing the Jewish people.<sup>49</sup> The author condemned the attempt to rehabilitate that language, adding that one should pay heed to "the hatred that the survivors of Buchenwald certainly hold toward the language of the murderers." This tendency, of defending the presumed sensibilities of Holocaust survivors, would recur in the following decades, more often than not by commentators who had not experienced the Nazi oppression themselves. More broadly, it indicated a popular perception in the Yishuv to treat German culture as an evident danger, one that was rooted in many decades of anti-Jewish sentiments and that fully materialized in the years of Nazism.

Such stance did not go uncontested, however. A commentator from the left-leaning journal *Al Ha-Mishmar* rejected the assumption that whoever holds a "positive view" of Goethe should count as an admirer of Hitler's Germany. Referring to the news report that the committee did not want to pay tribute to a German classic under the present circumstances, the columnist asked: "Should Goethe pay for the sins of Hitler? It is unthinkable that experts of Hebrew literature would choose to take revenge on our behalf in this manner."<sup>50</sup> A commentator from *Ha-Mashkif* criticized the attempt "to reject the achievements of certain nations in the realms of culture and science. Let us not go down a path that is more foolish, that is worse than chauvinism,

and which is, in fact, closer to degeneration and madness.” The Jewish nation should absorb influences from foreign cultures, and translation was a major element of such an approach. He reminded the readers that “all nations and all lands have inflicted suffering on us. Let us not mark certain languages as legitimate or as illegitimate for translation.”<sup>51</sup> Ultimately, the anti-German approach prevailed. In 1945, the committee convened again, this time deciding to give the prize to a translator from Yiddish into Hebrew.

In the immediate postwar period, some Hebrew writers tackled the question of how the decline of German should be understood in its broader historical perspective, and whether and how it reflected the submission of German society to Nazi ideas and policies. These debates likewise were predicated on the understanding that the transformation of the German language mirrored the decay of German culture in its entirety. The writer Israel Cohen published in 1946 an essay on the “linguistic revolution” that overtook Germany during the years of Nazi rule. According to his account, turbulent times such as wars are bound to bring a multitude of changes to the vocabulary and forms of expression prevalent in a society. In the case of German, the negative aspects of such a revolution were strikingly dominant because the linguistic revolution was integral to the country’s broader “vicious diabolic scheme.” As the war came to an end, the linguistic results had become discernible for any observer familiar with the language and its culture: “Now that Germany has been occupied, and its newspapers and letters and the language of its orders and administration are out in the open, it has become possible to examine and to notice what these despots have done not only to the culture and spirit of others, of the enslaved, but also to themselves, to *their own language* and their own culture.” The glorious language of German poets and thinkers “has become broken and uninhibited.” Under such conditions, German became “degenerated, ugly,” turning into the language of henchmen uttering execution commands, a language of shouts. This impression, Cohen added, “is not merely a Jewish sentiment that derives from a certain ‘complex’ towards the Germans, the murderers of its people.” Others who have been exposed to the German language during the war and in its aftermath, he noted, have also acknowledged that shift.<sup>52</sup>

Like Sokolow one decade earlier, Cohen emphasized that the brutality of Nazified German was not an ex nihilo occurrence. Rather, this linguistic shift

drew on deeply ingrained features of German style and rhetoric that had been in use for several decades, particularly in the military, bureaucratic, and political realms. This process involved not the coining of new words but turning existing vocabulary into narrow tools for Nazi propaganda, thus emptying words of their meanings and deeper dimensions. Under Nazism, those persons more inclined to a gentler use of language, “who evidently existed during Hitler’s days, were hidden, and their influence was apparent only insofar as they ‘accepted’ the taste of officers and warlords.”<sup>53</sup> And so, the discrepancy between the two Germanies became ever more apparent, for “in the agitated voice of Hitler it is impossible to speak the delicate and profound language of Goethe.” Cohen perceived German as encompassing opposing forces of enlightenment and destruction. The Nazification of German was a historical stage that tipped the balance, thus giving rise to one German tradition at the expense of another. Cohen concluded his essay by noting that the collapse of the German people was made possible by the absolute corruption and fall of their language and culture: “There is a great deal that one could learn from this dreadful case. May humanity seek to learn from it!”<sup>54</sup> Cohen thus shifted the focus away from the German case to the broader lessons it raised.

The attempt to perceive the Nazification of German as a cautionary lesson for other nations also appeared in an essay written by Hebrew writer and teacher Raphael Aronstein in 1950. Aronstein (with whom Martin Buber took lessons in colloquial Hebrew upon his arrival in Jerusalem<sup>55</sup>) reviewed *LTI: The Language of the Third Reich*, a work published in 1947 by Victor Klemperer, a German scholar of Jewish descent. Klemperer survived the war years in miserable conditions and carrying out forced labor with his non-Jewish wife in Dresden. In 1945 he was able to flee the city, and one year later he published his wartime notes, in which he documented and commented on the transformation of the German language under Nazism.<sup>56</sup> In explaining the relevance of Klemperer’s notes to the Israeli readership, Aronstein invoked Klemperer’s striking observation that the language of the Third Reich penetrated not only the minds of the movement’s followers but also those of its victims. In his book, Klemperer noted how he had found himself employing Nazi forms of thought and expression. Aronstein detected this phenomenon among young German Jews immigrating to Palestine in the

1930s, who “unintentionally exercised their thoughts in *Nazi patterns*. They detested Nazi ideology that targeted their own people, and yet the poison of the *form of thought* trickled into their minds and operated there.”<sup>57</sup> Aronstein introduced several key features of Klemperer’s book and emphasized how useful it was for understanding the psychological struggle a German Jew had to undergo amid German’s transformation during these years. He also found much to learn from Klemperer’s prediction that the language of the Third Reich would remain an integral and permanent facet of the German language: “We understand this completely. And this affirms what we see with other phenomena: precisely what *policy* seeks to conceal, *language* reveals.”<sup>58</sup>

Beyond the general insight into the decisive and yet elusive place of language in politics, Aronstein emphasized that the lessons of German’s Nazification also bore significance for those concerned with the status of language in the newly founded state of Israel: “We too have gone through a war. Our literature and press also show signs of a ‘new tongue,’ of special expressions that allude to dangers. At times—shockingly and shamefully—such expressions resonate terms from the LTI, and it would be appropriate to take heed of these occurrences—not only with regard to the themes of such expressions but also with regard to their underlying *spirit*. This ought to be done through designated education that would nullify the value of the ‘chauvinistic language’ and the value of its pillars.” Writing in the aftermath of the 1948 war, Aronstein saw Israeli society as facing a threat of latent brutalization of language and culture. His reflections on the potential parallels between Germany and other nations testify to a considerable openness to consider the lessons of Nazism as potentially applying to the nascent Israeli state. The German language in this sense not only represented the brutalization of German society but also served as an example of how language bears witness to the moral decline of society.

### The Problem of Hearing German

In the first years of its existence, Israel carried out an informal boycott of German in the country’s public sphere, not allowing it to be recited, sung, or spoken in official and cultural venues. The boycott, however, was regularly challenged.<sup>59</sup> The debates on boycotting the German language were often part of broader political struggles in Israel, and the arguments for and against



hearing German in public frequently reverted to older disputes in the Jewish world concerning the danger and allure of the German language.

Already during the war period some activists and writers argued that at a time when the German language was the vehicle of vitriolic antisemitism, Jews should not tolerate its presence. The Revisionist journalist Shalom Rosenfeld commented on the declaration by the Czech prime minister-in-exile that he would not speak German until victory was achieved, choosing to give a lecture in Oxford in Latin. Rosenfeld anticipated that this measure would be written off in the Jewish world as silly, chauvinistic, a senseless “boycott of Heine’s language and a revenge against Goethe’s language.” Rosenfeld detected a certain leniency among Jews toward German and its cultural status. Naturally, he admitted, language itself is not to blame. And yet, “this honest gentile’s position is closer to my heart than the position of our wise Jews. Given the atrocious reality, as the tongue of Heine is being used day in, day out to express hatred and venom against our people in Goebbels’ radio and in Streicher’s *Der Stürmer*; amid the fact that precisely *in our own land* the language of the enemy is omnipresent—the Czech statesman’s deed should serve us as inspiration.”<sup>60</sup> Another journalist associated the willingness to hear German in Palestine with previous Jewish assimilatory currents: “We remember well the destructive actions of our Germanizers in Lemberg, Prague, and Budapest, against the will of a population mostly Magyar or Slavic. Something similar happens here too.”<sup>61</sup> The author invoked an image of urban Habsburg Jews as naïve, assimilating, and pro-German in order to paint in hostile colors the political proclivities of German immigrants.

The State of Israel did not issue an official boycott of the German language, but its institutions acted on a principled rejection of German.<sup>62</sup> In 1951, *Ha-Emet*, the periodical of the Israeli liberal party (and a political hub of German immigrants), planned to invite the German actor Albert Basserman, an eighty-five-year-old non-Jewish actor who left Germany with his Jewish wife in 1934 and openly opposed the Nazi regime. Basserman’s credentials did not help the organizers, as the Film and Theater Board—the Israeli cultural censor—refused to permit an artistic performance in German. Moshe Sharett, the minister of foreign affairs, pleaded to the minister of the interior, Moshe Shapira, to put pressure on the committee to reconsider its decision given the actor’s impeccable record. In a letter to Shapira, Sharett

noted that German should be seen as “one of the official and national languages of a country which is friendly to Israel, and with whom we have tight diplomatic and economic relations.”<sup>63</sup> Sharett was referring here to Basserman’s home at the time—Switzerland. He thus attempted to separate the language from its speakers, and even to distinguish German’s capacity as the language of Germany from its capacity as the language of other German-speaking populations.

Sharett’s efforts, however, came to a naught. The committee declined Sharett’s definition of German as the language of “a friendly state” and determined that it “stands by its position not to allow public artistic performances in the German language.”<sup>64</sup> Considering Basserman’s anti-Nazi past, the committee allowed the actor to perform “reading events” in private, “closed venues” only. In the right-wing periodical *Herut*, a commentator attempted to instigate moral panic: “Soon enough the ‘pure’ German language (not that of the Ostjuden) will be heard in front of thousands (in ‘closed circles’) who yearn for the culture of the murderers.”<sup>65</sup>

Later in 1952, Pinhas Rosen, minister of justice, conveyed his support of the position of the conductor of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra that Israeli performers should be allowed to sing German lyrics in Gustav Mahler’s Second Symphony. Departing from the stance of the Film and Theater Board, German-born Rosen believed that the government should not “officially oppose the performance . . . in the German language.”<sup>66</sup> The first steps toward normalization between Israel and West Germany and a number of collaborations in the realms of education and science further contributed to a partial loosening of the boycott. In 1954, it was reported that an Israeli delegate of the Jewish Agency visiting Zurich faced an audience of local Jewish youth who did not understand English. The delegate refused to speak in German, but a compromise was reached: he gave his lecture in *Kongressdeutsch*, “which has some resemblance to Swiss-German.”<sup>67</sup> In September 1959, a furor arose in the Hebrew media over the decision of Kol Ha-Musika, the Israeli classical music radio station, to play pieces sung in German. A columnist protested the decision, saying it might hurt the feelings of many Israelis. In a letter to *Davar*, Hugo Bergmann responded: “I would like to note that there are in Israel also people for whom declaring a boycott on a language—on the language in which Goethe and Herzl thought and wrote, in which the

Zionist congresses were held until the establishment of Israel—generates a feeling of shame and disgrace. *Kol Ha-Musika* should consider these people's feelings too.”<sup>68</sup> Bergmann's letter evoked several critical responses, including one from the popular essayist and poet Nathan Alterman. The latter argued that it was reasonable for members of the Jewish people to be particularly sensitive to a language whose words “were used until not so long ago for the task of exterminating the Jews.”<sup>69</sup> Bergmann, who in the 1910s and 1920s had stood firm in his encouragement of Buber and German Zionists to overcome their attachment to the German language and to immerse themselves in Hebrew, found himself compelled in the postwar period to defend the right of German to be heard in public.

The near absence of German from the Israeli public sphere came to an end with the 1961 Eichmann Trial, an event to which Israeli authorities strived to draw as much attention as possible. In May 1960 Israeli secret services captured former Nazi official Adolf Eichmann in a suburb of Buenos Aires. As an officer at the Reich Main Security Office, Eichmann planned and oversaw the systematic deportations of Jews to concentration camps. After the war, he lived under false identity in Argentina until an intelligence tip allowed the Israeli state to bring him to trial in Israel for the crimes he had committed. The Israeli government under David Ben-Gurion wished to imbue the trial with historical and pedagogical significance, demonstrating the magnitude of the destruction of European Jewry and exhibiting Israel's commitment to bring Nazi criminals to justice. The trial also provided Eichmann with the opportunity to plead for his innocence in his own words. Parts of the trial were transmitted live on radio, and it was recorded on camera.<sup>70</sup> Segments of the trial were shown regularly in cinemas (television had not yet been introduced into the country). The event received extensive coverage and gripped Israeli society and the Jewish world from the beginning of the trial in April 1961 until Eichmann's execution in the following year.

A major practical challenge in the conduct of the trial concerned the administration of the languages spoken in it. The Jerusalem District Court stated, “The Eichmann Trial will be conducted in the Hebrew language,”<sup>71</sup> but participants used several languages, including English, German, and Yiddish. The proceedings were translated in real time to German, French,

and English. Proceedings conducted in German and other languages were translated simultaneously into Hebrew.

During the preparations for the trial, “Bureau 06,” the special police unit preparing the body of evidence against Eichmann, tasked several officers with the assignment of preparing a dictionary of German terms and concepts into Hebrew (fig. 10).<sup>72</sup> This was to ensure uniformity in the Hebrew translations of documents from the Nazi administration. Most of the dictionary, about sixty pages long, was dedicated to bureaucratic and technical terms, but the dictionary was also a sustained effort to translate the numerous terms and euphemisms specific to the Nazi apparatus, such as “Arisation” (*Arisierung*), “Ancestral heritage” (*Ahnenerbe*, translated into Hebrew as *moreshet avot*), “Law for the Protection of Blood” (*Blutschutzgesetz*), “Settlement of the Jewish problem” (*Bereinigung des Judenproblems*), “Forced sterilization” (*Zwangssterilisierung*), “Subhumanness” (*Untermenschum*), “de-Judaize” (*entjuden*), and “Germanization” (*Eindeutschung*).

Shalom Rosenfeld, who covered the trial for *Maariv*, noted after examining the dictionary that the various entries reveal “the pompous, Teutonic, arrogant, threatening terminology that the sick Nazi mind invented in the days of great darkness of the German culture and the German language.”<sup>73</sup> As the trial began, Eichmann’s voice in the courtroom fascinated the audience. When he responded to the first questions concerning his guilt—*Im Sinne der Anklage, nicht schuldig* (“not guilty as charged”)—Rosenfeld transcribed the German words into Hebrew letters, noting the “serenity, monotonous tone, with only the word ‘nicht’ being emphasized.”<sup>74</sup> Another commentator noted that “the German language was heard here, and it was heard also there. In the camps. In the ghettos. How strange.”<sup>75</sup> Other reporters transcribed into Hebrew letters Eichmann’s word *Ja wohl* when the latter was asked to confirm his identity.<sup>76</sup> Shabtai Teveth, writing for *Haaretz*, noted however that the moment was anticlimactic in how it normalized Eichmann: “And suddenly it appeared that the shocking and the inconceivable has turned into a presence that speaks in the language of humans, from now on the interaction was to be conducted using normal words, all of which could be found in a dictionary.”<sup>77</sup>

On the following day, when prosecutor Gideon Hausner played in the courtroom a recording of Eichmann’s interrogation by the Israeli police,

E 1	הסבר והערות	ה ת ר ג ן ם
המלה בגרמנית		
Ehegesundheitsgesetz		החוק לבריאות הנשואין
Eingangsstelle )		מרכז (צומת) הדאר הנכנס
Einlaufsstelle )		בהחזרות; "במסרת כבוד"
ehrenamtlich		ניירות-כניסה
Einreisepapiere		מבצע; הפעלה; מאמץ
Einsatz		
Einsatzgruppe	אוזכרה גם בתעתיק עברי: "איוצק-גרופה"	עוצבת-מבצע
Einsatzkommando	גם בתעתיק עברי: "איוצק קומנדו"	יחידת-מבצע
Einspruch		ערעור
Einspruch erheben		לערער; להתנגד
Einwanderungsberatungs- stelle		החנת יעוץ למהגרים
entjuden		לפנות מיהודים
entjudet		מפונה מיהודים
Entjudung von....		סלוק היהודים מ....
erstellen		להכין; להציב; להקצות
Erwägung		סקול

FIGURE 10. A page from a dictionary of German terms prepared by the Israeli Police before the Eichmann Trial. From: *Milon nivim, munahim, u'vituyim meyhudaim le'hakalat tirgumo ha-abid shel homer ha-re'ayot ba'safa ha-germanit* (Jerusalem: Israel Police, n.d. [1961]). National Library of Israel, 2017 A 14959=2. Courtesy of the National Library of Israel.

Rosenfeld described the scene: "Eichmann's voice produced an echo as if it were coming from a deep grave."<sup>78</sup> A commentator for *Davar*, Moshe Tavor, noticed the proximity between Eichmann and Hitler's German as it emerged from the recorded interrogation: "The same Viennese dialect, same mixture of typical Austrian vocabulary and Nazi jargon, same rolling 'r'—in short, the voice of his master."<sup>79</sup> Two days later, Tavor noted that Eichmann's use of the verb *verkräften*, denoting the administrative ability to "process" the deportations of the hundreds of thousands of Jews, revealed Eichmann's rootedness in "the vocabulary of the SS and the Gestapo."<sup>80</sup> Tavor noted that "Eichmann's vocabulary is taken to a large degree from the vocabulary of the Nazis." Despite the years passed, "Eichmann continues to think through the categories of the Nazi order."<sup>81</sup>

Other commentators associated Eichmann's discernible ways of expression with mere tediousness: "The voice is deep, dim, monolithic. . . . Dozens of foreign reporters . . . have come here especially to hear him . . . , and now they sit in the courtroom, the many reporters and the audience, impatiently, witnessing their decaying alertness and diminishing expectation, as they are yawning. . . . All that he says, whatever he explains in long, convoluted, German sentences, is so utterly *predictable*, that it leaves no room for drama."<sup>82</sup> Elsewhere Eichmann's voice was described as haunting, "the metal voice of a machine . . . , a voice that brings back echoes from the past."<sup>83</sup> In *Davar*, a commentator noted that the defense lawyers were pursuing their efforts "entirely in clumsy German, filled with sub-clauses and grammatical notes, a painful German crashed in this trial by obscene distortions."<sup>84</sup> On the following day, Shmuel Shnitser described the pain involved in listening to Eichmann's "sticky paste of words," produced by his "sickly verbosity, grey dullness and painful dwelling in details of his [recorded] testimony." Shnitser believed that Eichmann's psychological relation to the German language is of profound importance, providing him with the ability to make use of its "capacity of composing lengthy sentences, of its impossible syntax, of its ceremonial and flowery vocabulary."<sup>85</sup> Another writer remarked that those who did not speak German were at a disadvantage in deciphering the Eichmann riddle: "Only those who are able to follow Eichmann's convoluted sentences and those who can assess his desperate efforts to express himself adequately can move a step closer to sorting this question."<sup>86</sup> Hannah Arendt, reporting



about the trial for the *New Yorker*, similarly noted that Eichmann's German was marked by the use of bureaucratic jargon and empty stock phrases, proving his inability to produce a clear thought: "Some of the comedy cannot be conveyed in English, because it lies in Eichmann's heroic fight with the German language, which invariably defeats him."<sup>87</sup> Eichmann's German was thus a sensational aspect of the trial, as it appeared to capture the Nazi mindset more than the content of his answers. Eichmann turned ideas of Nazi German into an unmediated experience for his listeners.

Both in its symbolic significance and in practical terms, German was central to the conduct of the trial and the efforts to prove Eichmann's guilt. The process of questioning Eichmann relied considerably on the prosecution's ability to prove that Nazi terms and euphemisms—as they appeared in the pertinent documentation and in the defendant's own testimony—indicated Eichmann's premeditated effort to coordinate the mass killing of European Jews. In one session, Eichmann was asked to clarify the meaning of *Sonderbehandlung* ("special treatment"), a term that appeared in a Reich Main Security Office correspondence with Eichmann's signature.<sup>88</sup> He denied that the term stood for killing, insisting that it had different meanings, including nonlethal ones, such as "Germanization" of ethnic Poles.<sup>89</sup> In another part of the questioning, Eichmann was asked to explain the significance of the term "prompt" (*schlagartig*) with regard to the deportation of the entire Jewish population of Budapest.<sup>90</sup> Elsewhere Eichmann argued that the words *Vernichtung* ("destruction") and *Ausrottung* ("eradication") as used by Hitler and the Nazi regime in 1939 did not denote the physical destruction but merely the political destruction of Judaism.<sup>91</sup> The prosecutor mentioned Eichmann's written use of the term *entkapitalisieren* ("decapitalize") when referring to the systematic impoverishing of Viennese Jews.<sup>92</sup> In another section, the meaning of the term *Endlösung* ("Final Solution") as it had been used in 1941 was the subject of an exchange between Hausner and Eichmann, as the latter claimed that it had denoted deportation to Madagascar, not systematic killing.<sup>93</sup> In other sessions, the judges asked Eichmann to clarify bureaucratic terms, such as *federführend* or *Funktionsbefehl*.<sup>94</sup> Hausner also asked Eichmann to clarify what *Umsiedlung* ("resettlement") and *Evakuierung* ("evacuation") denoted in different documents.<sup>95</sup> The listeners of the trial were thus

introduced to the striking significance of Nazi terminology and linguistic concealment to the planning and practice of destroying European Jewry.

Matters of terminology were also addressed extensively in the testimonies of witnesses, who introduced both the administrative language of the ghettos and the camps, as well as the slang developed by those interned there. Yehiel Dinur, an Auschwitz survivor, described himself as one who had been a *Muselman* in the camp, a term coined by inmates in Auschwitz to describe prisoners who were no longer able to stand on their feet and respond to reality; walking dead, whose crawling resembled a praying Muslim.<sup>96</sup> Other testimonies introduced terms specific to the Nazi management of deportations and concentration camps. The witness David Wdowiński mentioned the *Umschlagplatz*, from which deportations to concentration camps took place.<sup>97</sup> Another witness introduced a host of terms denoting the structures of the Auschwitz concentration camp, such as the *Kinderblock* (children block), *Familienlager* (family camp), *Strafkommando* (policing unit), and *Blockälteste* (block elder). Another Auschwitz survivor, Raya Kagan, who was assigned administrative tasks in the camp, was asked specifically about Nazi euphemisms designating the killing of Jews.<sup>98</sup> Such terms were already introduced to readership of historiography of the Holocaust and in literature produced by Holocaust survivors, but the trial brought the Nazi language in an auditory form to a mass audience.

Nazi German, however, was not the only type of German that was heard in the courtroom. The logistical setup of the trial was designed to enable communication between German and Hebrew speakers, even though the main participants could speak German: all three judges were born and raised in Germany, Eichmann and his lawyers communicated exclusively in German, and the prosecutor, Gideon Hausner, was born in 1915 in Galicia and was quite proficient in German. While the simultaneous translation rendered discussions with the defendant and his lawyers accessible to the wider audience, it did not have a facilitating function for the trial's protagonists.

When the judges sought to address the defendant, they had to wait for the translators to deliver their words from Hebrew to German and vice versa, who occasionally misunderstood or mistranslated the original. In a number of cases in which the judges noted such mistakes, they intervened and





FIGURE 11. Adolf Eichmann (wearing headphones) and the three judges.  
Source: Government Press Office. Courtesy of Massuah,  
International Institute for Holocaust Studies.

corrected the translation. Sometimes the judges decided to simply save the hassle. In one case in which Eichmann failed to answer Judge Moshe Landau's question, Landau interjected, "Perhaps I'll explain it in German," repeating the question in German and afterward returning to Hebrew.<sup>99</sup> In other cases, a judge noted Eichmann's obscure terms, asking him to choose "a clearer term in German" in his response (fig. 11).<sup>100</sup>

The ceaseless translations turned the trial into an event that involved long pauses every step of the way. In some cases, the prosecutor and the judges chose not to embrace the imperative of conducting the trial in Hebrew. Prosecutor Hausner frequently resorted to German when interrogating Eichmann, in particular when raising follow-up questions or when seized

with anger.<sup>101</sup> When Hausner appeared to be impatient with Eichmann's convoluted and evasive answers, he turned directly to German. In one case, he shouted: "Haben Sie es gesagt? ja oder nein?" ("Did you say it? Yes or no?").<sup>102</sup> Hausner's and the judges' linguistic shifts were scarcely recorded in the published protocols.<sup>103</sup>

Upon the completion of the prosecutor and defense attorney's statements, the judges were given the opportunity to ask Eichmann any questions they thought required further clarification. It was in this context that the façade of a linguistic barrier between judges and defendant was entirely abandoned. Judge Yitzhak Raveh began by saying in Hebrew: "I will ask you a few questions in German," after which he turned his face to Eichmann and took off his glasses. What followed was a lengthy exchange between the two, held in German. Raveh's decision may have been related not only to time constraints and impatience but also to the topic on which he decided to focus. His concluding questions did not involve Eichmann's deeds and whereabouts in his official capacity, but pertained to Eichmann's conscience and moral convictions. Raveh invoked an early comment Eichmann had made in the interrogation, in which he said that his unalloyed commitment to the Nazi law was a result of his understanding of Kant's categorical imperative, which, for Eichmann, meant the individual's exhibiting of committed lawfulness. It was on this statement that Raveh sought to dwell, not only exploring Eichmann's dubious understanding of Kant but also inquiring how it squared with the kind of actions in which he had engaged—organizing a mass killing of innocent human beings. On this matter, Raveh's didactic line of questioning left Eichmann little room to maneuver, until he admitted that in his capacity as a Nazi officer he did not follow Kant's imperative.<sup>104</sup> Raveh's direct dialogue with Eichmann in their shared language proved one of the few instances in which Eichmann admitted a certain personal responsibility for his actions.

After this exchange, the linguistic dam could no longer be rebuilt. Judge Benjamin Halevy started his series of questions by stating, "I will also allow myself to deviate from the Hebrew order of the trial and ask the defendant in his own language," without adding any other justification.<sup>105</sup> The presiding judge, Moshe Landau, who was the last to ask his questions, followed suit, although he decided to ask his question in Hebrew and then immediately translate it by himself into German.<sup>106</sup> During these few hours,

the courtroom was a German-speaking room, where the Nazi perpetrator conversed with the Israeli judges—all Jewish immigrants and refugees from Germany—in their mother tongue.

The trial proved a remarkable encounter in which the different meanings of German met in Jerusalem. Ideas of German as the language of Nazi brutality received their performative validation. Yet German also appeared as the *lingua franca* of Central European Jewry, and as a vehicle through which the Israeli juridical court exercised its power. It is therefore not merely a symbolic factor that the trial was profoundly multilingual and heavily Germanophone; this fact added a crucial sensory dimension to the listeners' encounter and reencounter with the German and Jewish pasts. The Eichmann trial granted German a degree of audibility unprecedented in the short history of the State of Israel. It signaled a gradual process of demystification of German in the Israeli public realm, as Nazi German was consigned to a defensive, weak position.

The open contacts between Israel and West Germany—reaching a peak with the establishment of full diplomatic relations in 1965—affirmed Israel's *de facto* recognition of “a different Germany.” At the same time, German continued to be imbued with loaded meanings, often standing at the heart of disputes over cooperation with German individuals or consumption of German cultural goods.<sup>107</sup> In 2000, the speaker of the Knesset decided to invite the German president Johannes Rau to deliver a speech in German in the Knesset. One Knesset member said, “The time has not come for the German language to be heard over the Knesset's podium.”<sup>108</sup> Another member, Dov Shilansky, who in 1952 plotted to plant a bomb in Tel Aviv in protest of the reparations agreement, called the decision “a desecration of the memory of the Holocaust.” Rau was well aware of the sensitivity, and began his German speech by proclaiming, “I do understand what it means for some of you, in this honorable hall, to hear the German language,” thanking the Israeli Knesset for inviting him nonetheless.<sup>109</sup>

In 2005, Knesset member and Holocaust survivor Tommy Lapid addressed the German president Horst Köhler before the latter's speech in German. Lapid noted that “German is the language of Hitler, Goebbels, and Eichmann, but it is also the language of Goethe, Schiller, and Heine. For this reason, Mr. President, when we are inviting you to deliver a speech in the

Knesset, we cannot prevent you from speaking in German.”<sup>110</sup> Köhler began his speech with a few sentences of gratitude uttered in carefully recited Hebrew.<sup>111</sup> Three years later, Chancellor Angela Merkel also began her speech with a few words in Hebrew, thanking the hosts for allowing her to speak in her mother tongue.<sup>112</sup> This short tradition involved recognizing a persistent emotional and political sensitivity among parts of Israeli and Jewish audiences, for whom the sound of German evoked a violent past.

### Conclusion

Historically, German was not the only language that served perpetrators of mass killing of Jews. Consider the role of Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian in the anti-Jewish pogroms of the late nineteenth century, the First World War, and the Russian Revolution. The 1903 pogrom of Kishinev sent shock waves across the Jewish world.<sup>113</sup> The culpability of the language of the perpetrators, however, did not become a factor in Jewish historical memory. Granted, the systematic killing carried out by the Nazis exceeded in its methods and results all other cases of anti-Jewish violence. The modern means of propaganda used by the Nazi regime also imbued the German language with a sensory dimension that distinguished it from other historical cases. Still, the prewar and postwar texts discussed in this chapter do suggest that it was not only the emotional response to the Nazi violence that made German a sensitive matter in Jewish societies; the intensity and multivalence of the responses to German’s Nazification had to do with German’s multiple roles in modern Jewish history. Indeed, already in the 1880s and 1890s, as shown earlier, Jewish nationalists protested the ubiquity of German in Jewish societies by associating the language with antisemitism. The Nazification of German tapped into an existing trope in Jewish nationalism.

Moreover, it was not Holocaust survivors that mostly disseminated the notion that German had to be forbidden, but rather politicians, journalists, and thinkers from different backgrounds, who did not necessarily experience the Nazi regime firsthand. Indeed, the rejection of German’s presence—in its written, spoken, and heard forms—had a political subtext, albeit not a uniform one. German played an important role in Jewish nationalists’ representations of antisemitic violence after 1933, often serving to enhance or downplay German’s meanings in history.

In 1971, upon reading a quip in an Israeli newspaper degrading the German language, Hugo Bergmann wrote in his diary: “We university teachers endeavor to tell our students, morning and evening: learn German! Not just for German alone, but rather because your ignorance of German cuts you off from six generations of Jewish culture. Without knowledge of German you cannot read the most important thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, you cannot read Herzl’s diaries, the protocols of Zionist congresses, *Auto-Emancipation*, nor Kafka, nor Max Brod and naturally, not Schelling and not Kant and not Goethe and not Schopenhauer and not Fichte and not . . . , and not (without end).”<sup>114</sup> A Prague-born Zionist, a German-speaking immigrant to Palestine, a professor of philosophy, and a translator of Kant into Hebrew, Bergmann was alarmed by the rejection of German in Israeli society. The lamenting tone in his diary entry attests to a sad realization: German, a language that until recently had been fundamental to Jewish life, had turned into a foreign language.

## EPILOGUE

The Jewish history of the German language encapsulates the history of European Jews in the modern period. As a vehicle of emancipation, German represented the promise of integration into Central European societies. As a language of education and science, it promoted secularization and acquisition of universal knowledge across the Jewish world. As a language of diplomacy and activism, it was key to the conduct of modern Jewish politics. As a language of German nationalism and Nazism, it was the vehicle of antisemitic persecution.

The place of German in modern Jewish history encompassed both practical and symbolic meanings, inextricably tied up with each other. The tensions and contradictions embedded in German were made particularly visible in the history of Jewish nationalism. The relation of Jewish nationalists to German was not simply affirmative or negative, functional or emotional. Indeed, mixed and conflicting views concerning German and its merit bore upon each other as Jewish nationalists formulated and disseminated their cause. The story of German in Jewish history thus defies binaries of insider and outsider, at home and in exile, assimilated and unassimilated, and, indeed, Jewish and non-Jewish. German was in this respect a reflection of the modern Jewish diasporic condition.

In Jewish political affairs, German was a language of power but not necessarily a language of the powerful. Before the Holocaust, the internal

hierarchy of Jewish multilingualism, involving Hebrew, Yiddish, German, and other languages, was in constant flux. The prestigious status of German in the Zionist Congress at the turn of the twentieth century differed significantly from its position in Jewish politics between the two world wars. The impact of Hebraism and Yiddishism on Jewish political activism in Palestine, Eastern Europe, and the United States meant that the usage of German came to be accompanied increasingly by an apologetic tone. Under such conditions, questioning the merit of German or refusing to use it were also ways of exercising political power over rival factions within Jewish nationalism.

The Zionist effort to establish a Hebrew-speaking, self-governing community in Palestine posed significant challenges to the place of German as an emblematic language of Jewish political culture. However, it was the rise of Nazi Germany and the physical destruction of European Jewry that brought the Jewish history of the German language to an end. Postwar Jewish international politics aligned with the prevailing linguistic order, in which English served as the primary global language.<sup>1</sup> The majority of Eastern European Yiddish-speakers were murdered in the course of the war, and broader political and generational shifts in postwar Jewish diaspora communities rendered the prewar Yiddishist agenda largely obsolete.<sup>2</sup> The Jewish language question was gone. After decades in which Jewish nationalists resorted frequently to German when discussing “serious matters,”<sup>3</sup> in the early postwar period German became the language that one could speak only in private. The main legacy that German continued to carry in Jewish politics and culture was its function as the language of antisemitism, whose public presence among Jews was no longer to be tolerated.

Although German turned into a forbidden, suppressed language, it did not manifest any existing political threat. In the State of Israel, it was rather Arabic that the political establishment saw as constituting a potential danger, a language whose learning and use among Jews should be confined mainly to security purposes. This tendency had already figured in Jewish-Arab relations in Palestine under late Ottoman and British rule, but it became dominant with the violent escalation of the conflict in the 1930s and through the 1948 war.<sup>4</sup> Setting aside the substantial differences between the status of Arabic and German in modern Jewish history, one point of resemblance is worth noting. The quest for Jewish national sovereignty involved a steady process

of forgetting languages that had built up the Jewish diasporic experience. The Jewish history of Arabic, similarly to German, included continuous, profound immersion of Jewish individuals and communities in Arab cultures over centuries, producing varieties of Judeo-Arabic dialects, vibrant Jewish communities of native Arabic speakers, a copious Arabic-language canon of Jewish literature, philosophy, and science, and numerous forms of everyday interaction with Muslim and Christian Arabic speakers. The history of Jews and the Arabic language, too, has been overshadowed by violence.

The formation of Jewish national sovereignty and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict made it ever more common to perceive Arabic as a language antithetical to Jews' rights and to Jewish nationhood, a threat from within and without. Yet such a perception elides the centuries-long cohabitation of Jews and Arabs in Palestine and other parts of the Middle East.<sup>5</sup> The ongoing efforts of the Israeli state to ensure the supremacy of Hebrew over Arabic echoes earlier efforts of Jewish nationalists to combat the presence of Jewish diaspora languages in Palestine and Israel. While the establishment of modern nation-states often entails the suppression of dialects and minority languages,<sup>6</sup> in Israel this suppression has involved the unlearning of significant aspects of Jewish history and culture.

German has largely disappeared from the Jewish political sphere. However, its story captures the vicissitudes of modern Jewish history and the competing efforts to articulate a future of Jewish nationhood in, with, and against German.



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## NOTES

### Introduction

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## Chapter 1

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20. Helmut Walser Smith, *Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion, and Race across the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 39–73; Christian Jansen, "The Formation of German Nationalism, 1740–1850,"

in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, ed. Helmut Walser Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 234–59.

21. Frederick C. Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought, 1790–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 1–10.

22. Jansen, “German Nationalism,” 245–46.

23. Tim Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution: A History* (New York: Modern Library Chronicles Book, 2010), 105–12.

24. Michael N. Forster, *After Herder: Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 55–90.

25. Tony Crowley, “That Obscure Object of Desire: A Science of Language,” in *Ideologies of Language*, ed. John E. Joseph and Talbot J. Taylor (London: Routledge, 2000), 39–40.

26. Zeev Sternhell, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*, trans. David Maisel (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 299–302.

27. Florian Coulmas, “Germanness: Language and Nation,” in *The German Language and the Real World: Sociolinguistic, Cultural and Pragmatic Perspectives on Contemporary German*, ed. Patrick Stevenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 55–68, here 59–60.

28. Jürgen Trabant, “How Relativistic Are Humboldt’s ‘Weltansichten’?,” in *Explorations in Linguistic Relativity*, ed. Martin Pütz and Marjolijn H. Verspoor (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2000), 25–44.

29. Wilhelm von Humboldt, “Über die Verschiedenheiten des menschlichen Sprachbaues,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (1827–1829; Berlin: B. Behr’s Verlag, 1907), 6:147.

30. Andreas Gardt, “Sprachnationalismus zwischen 1850 und 1945,” in *Nation und Sprache: Die Diskussion ihres Verhältnisses in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Andreas Gardt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), 247–71.

31. Shulamit Volkov, “Sprache als Ort der Auseinandersetzung mit Juden und Judentum in Deutschland, 1780–1933,” in *Jüdische Intellektuelle und die Philologen in Deutschland, 1871–1933*, ed. Wilfried Barner and Christoph König (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2001), 223–38; Toury, “Sprache als Problem,” 75–96; Bering, “Jews and the German Language,” 251–91.

32. Novalis, for instance, wrote in a letter to A. W. Schlegel: “We Germans have been translating for a long time, and the desire to translate appears to be a national characteristic, since there is hardly a German writer of importance who has not translated, and who does not take as much pride in his translations as he does in his original works. . . . The urge is an indication of the very noble, original nature of the German people. Germans are essentially cosmopolitan, and at the same time largely individualistic. For us alone translation has meant extension. . . . One translates out of true love



for the beautiful and for the literature of the nation.” Translation from André Lefevere, *Translating Literature: The German Tradition, from Luther to Rosenzweig* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), 65.

33. Lawrence Venuti, “Local Contingencies: Translation and National Identities,” in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, ed. Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 177–202.

34. Kamusella, *Politics of Language*, 44–46, 105; Holm Sundhaußen, *Der Einfluß der Herderschen Ideen auf die Nationsbildung bei den Völkern der Habsburger Monarchie* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1973).

35. Michael N. Forster, *German Philosophy of Language: From Schlegel to Hegel and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 266–69; Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 120–66.

36. Heymann Steinthal, ed., *Die sprachphilosophischen Werke Wilhelm's von Humboldt* (Berlin, 1884), 1.

37. Georg Eckart, ed., *Völkerpsychologie—Versuch einer Neuentdeckung: Texte von Lazarus, Steinthal und Wundt* (Weinheim: Psychologie Verlags Union, 1997), 28–32; Egbert Klautke, *The Mind of the Nation: Völkerpsychologie in Germany, 1851–1955* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015).

38. Tuska Benes, *In Babel's Shadow: Language, Philology, and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 242.

39. Heymann Steinthal, *Über Juden und Judentum: Vorträge und Aufsätze von H. Steinthal*, ed. Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums (Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1906), 14.

40. Benes, *Babel's Shadow*, 251; Egbert Klautke, “The Mind of the Nation: The Debate about Völkerpsychologie,” *Central Europe* 8, no. 1 (May 2010): 1–19.

41. Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 14–42; Gordin, *Scientific Babel*, 163–72.

42. Werses, “Awake, My People,” 201–2.

43. Leon Wieseltier, “Etwas über die jüdische Historik: Leopold Zunz and the Inception of Modern Jewish Historiography,” *History and Theory* 20, no. 2 (May 1981): 135–49. On the movement and its impact, see Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1994); Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Michael Brenner, *Prophets of the Past: Interpreters of Jewish History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 17–50; Nils H. Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Germany: Between History and Faith* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005); Thomas Meyer and Andreas Kilcher, eds., *Die “Wissenschaft des Judentums”: Eine Bestandsaufnahme* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015); Rachel

Livné-Freudenthal, *The Verein: Pioneers of the Science of Judaism in Germany* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Leo Baeck Institute and the Zalman Shazar Center, 2018).

44. Leopold Zunz, *Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur, nebst Nachrichten über ein altes bis jetzt ungedrucktes hebräisches Werk* (Berlin, 1818), 4. Translation from Wieseltier, “Etwas,” 148. On the term *Wissenschaft* and its use by Zunz, see Amos Bitzan, “Leopold Zunz and the Meanings of *Wissenschaft*,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 78, no. 2 (April 2017): 233–54.

45. Heinrich Graetz, *Tagebuch und Briefe*, ed. Reuven Michael (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1977), 429–30.

46. Leopold Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden, historisch entwickelt. Ein Beitrag zur Alterthumskunde und biblischen Kritik, zur Literatur- und Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin, 1832).

47. Zunz, 449–50.

48. Zunz, 451. Zunz also oversaw a new translation of the Bible into German, published in 1838. The translation was marked by an attempt to adhere to the syntax and other formal characteristics of ancient Hebrew. See Gillman, *History of German Jewish Bible*, 113–26.

49. Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge*, 451–52.

50. Zunz, 475.

51. Grossman, *Discourse on Yiddish*, 101–8. In reality, Yiddish continued to be spoken in different variations and levels of Germanization throughout the German principalities during the age of emancipation. See Steven Lowenstein, “The Complicated Language Situation of German Jewry, 1760–1914,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 36 (2002): 3–31.

52. Carsten Schapkow, *Role Model and Countermodel: The Golden Age of Iberian Jewry and German Jewish Culture during the Era of Emancipation* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 118–27; Grossman, *Discourse on Yiddish*, 105. On the place of the Sephardic past in German Jewish historiography, see Efron, *Allure of the Sephardic*, 190–229.

53. Henry C. Soussan, *The Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums in Its Historical Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 26–37.

54. David N. Myers, “Glaube und Geschichte: A Vexed Relationship in German-Jewish Culture,” in *Modern Judaism and Historical Consciousness: Identities, Encounters, Perspectives*, ed. Andreas Gotzmann and Christian Wiese (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 54–72, here 55.

55. Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment in the 19th Century* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2010), 18–19.

56. Verses, “*Awake, My People*,” 238–80; Miron, *Traveler Disguised*, 34–66.

57. Mordechai Zalkin, “Scientific Literature and Cultural Transformation in Nineteenth-Century East European Jewish Society,” *Aleph* 5 (2005): 249–71, here 252. On political and religious tensions around the publication of Hebrew scientific

literature, see Tal Kogman, "Science and the Rabbis: Haskamot, Haskalah, and the Boundaries of Jewish Knowledge in Scientific Literature and Textbooks," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 62 (2017): 1–15.

58. Zalkin, "Scientific Literature," 253.

59. Feiner, *Jewish Enlightenment in the 19th Century*, 43–47.

60. Stefi Jersch-Wenzel, "Legal Status and Emancipation," *German-Jewish History*, 2:24–27.

61. Michael Meyer, "Jewish Communities in Transition," *German-Jewish History*, 2:105–11.

62. Michael K. Silber, "Josephinian Reforms," *YIVO Encyclopedia*, 1:831–34; Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 67–68.

63. Translation from *German History in Documents and Images*, published by the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage\\_id=4248](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=4248).

64. David Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation: A History Across Five Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 61–71; Jersch-Wenzel, "Legal Status and Emancipation," 2:15–19.

65. Meyer, "Jewish Communities in Transition," 2:119–27.

66. Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe: The Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968), 49–58.

67. Yaacov Shavit, "A Duty Too Heavy to Bear: Hebrew in the Berlin Haskalah, 1783–1819: Between Classic, Modern, and Romantic," in *Hebrew in Ashkenaz: A Language in Exile*, ed. Lewis Glinert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 111–28, in particular 118–20.

68. William Weintraub, *The German Translations of the Pentateuch* [in Hebrew] (Chicago: College of Jewish Studies Press, 1967), 27–36.

69. Yaacov Shavit and Mordechai Eran, *The Hebrew Bible Reborn: From Holy Scripture to the Book of Books, A History of Biblical Culture and the Battles over the Bible in Modern Judaism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 64.

70. *Protokolle und Aktenstücke der zweiten Rabbiner-Versammlung, abgehalten zu Frankfurt am Main, vom 15ten bis zum 28ten Juli 1845* (Frankfurt, 1845), 32–33. Translation by J. Hessing, from: Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, ed., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 179.

71. Abraham Geiger, *Nothwendigkeit und Maß einer Reform des jüdischen Gottesdienstes: Ein Wort zur Verständigung* (Breslau, 1861), 11.

72. Geiger, 13.

73. *Dr. David Einhorn's ausgewählte Predigten und Reden*, ed. K. Kohler (New York, 1881), 90; Christian Wiese, "Inventing a New Language of Jewish Scholarship: The

Transition from German Wissenschaft des Judentums to American-Jewish Scholarship in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 36 (2002): 273–304.

74. Lederhendler, *Jewish Responses*, 19.

75. Michael A. Meyer, "German-Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Toward Modernity*, 247–67; Brinkmann, *Migration und Transnationalität*, 44–66; Alan Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation: The Response of Reform Judaism to American Culture, 1840–1930* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994), 150–56.

76. Immanuel Etkes, "Immanent Factors and External Influences in the Development of the Haskala Movement in Russia," in *Toward Modernity*, 13–32.

77. Michael Stanislawski, *A Murder in Lemberg: Politics, Religion, and Violence in Modern Jewish History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 18–51.

78. Rachel Manekin, "Herem in Lemberg: Maskilic Triumphalism and Jewish Historiography" [in Hebrew], *Zion* 73, no. 2 (2008): 173–98.

79. Robert S. Wistrich, "The Modernization of Viennese Jewry: The Impact of German Culture in a Multi-Ethnic State," in *Toward Modernity*, 43–70.

80. On the importance of this question in Bukovina, where there was not a single demographically dominant group, see David Rechter, *Becoming Habsburg: The Jews of Austrian Bukovina, 1774–1918* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013), 109–75.

81. Adolf Jellinek, "Die Juden in Österreich," *Der Orient*, May 13, 1848, 154; Wolfgang Häusler, "'Orthodoxie' und 'Reform' in Wiener Judentum in der Epoche des Hochliberalismus," *Studia Judaica Austriaca* 6 (1978): 29–56.

82. Michael Silber, "The Historical Experience of German Jewry and Its Impact on Haskalah and Reform in Hungary," in *Toward Modernity*, 107–57, here 127.

83. Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 220–30.

84. Malachi Haim Hacoen, *Jacob & Esau: Jewish European History Between Nation and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 279–331.

85. Dan Diner, "Imperiale Residuen," 259–74.

86. Yaacov Shavit and Jehuda Reinharz, *Glorious, Accursed Europe: An Essay on Jewish ambivalence* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2010), 24–26; Paul Mendes-Flohr, "The Berlin Jew as Cosmopolitan," in *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1890–1918*, ed. Emily Bilski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 14–31.

87. François Guesnet, *Polnische Juden im 19. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1998), 288–99. See also Jürgen Hensel, "Wie 'deutsch' war die 'fortschrittliche' jüdische Bourgeoisie im Königreich Polen?" in *Deutsch-jüdische Wechselbeziehungen in Ostmittel- und Südeuropa (19. und 20. Jahrhundert)*, ed. Hans Hecker and Walter Engel (Essen: Klartext, 2003), 135–72; François Guesnet, "'Languishing from a Distance': Louis Meyer and the Demise of the German Jewish Ideal," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 27 (2015): 117–51.

88. Guesnet, *Polnische Juden*, 299.

89. Mordechai Zalkin, *A New Dawn: The Jewish Enlightenment in the Russian Empire: Social Aspects* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2008), 230–38.

90. Bartal, *Letaken am*, 59.

91. Zalkin, *New Dawn*, 230.

92. Etkes also alludes to cases of Maskilim who proudly carried that label. Etkes, “Immanent Factors,” *Toward Modernity*, 28. On literary representations of the *daytsh*, see Seelig, *Strangers in Berlin*, 26–31; Marie Schumacher-Brunhes, “The Figure of the Daytsh in Yiddish Literature,” in *Jews and Germans in Eastern Europe*, ed. Tobias Grill (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 72–87; Nick Block, “On Nathan Birnbaum’s Messianism and Translating the Jewish Other,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 60 (2015): 61–78.

93. Avraham Ber Gottlob, *Zikbronot u’masa’ot* (1879; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1976), 1:285.

94. Lederhendler, *Jewish Responses*, 59–61.

95. Pauline Wengeroff, *Memoiren einer Grossmutter: Bilder aus der Kulturgeschichte der Juden Russlands im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1910), 2:30–31. English translation from Pauline Wengeroff, *Memoirs of a Grandmother*, trans. Shulamit S. Magnus (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 2:43.

96. As Shulmait Magnus shows, Wengeroff wrote her memoirs in several languages, among them German and Russian, and had it corrected, edited, and polished before its publication. See Shulamit S. Magnus, *A Woman’s Life: Pauline Wengeroff and Memoirs of a Grandmother* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2016), 153–55.

97. Jewish women in traditional Eastern European Jewish societies were not permitted to learn the Hebrew language. Their nearly unrestricted access to other languages and literatures had an important impact on the dissemination of ideas of the Haskalah. See Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society*, trans. Saadya Sternberg (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2004).

98. Etkes, “Immanent Factors,” in *Toward Modernity*, 28; Tobias Grill, *Der Westen im Osten: Deutsches Judentum und jüdische Bildungsreform in Osteuropa (1783–1939)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 62–153.

99. Khone Shmeruk, *Yiddish Literature: Aspects of Its History* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Mif’alim universita’iyim le’hotsa’ah le’or, 1978), 261–93; Israel Bartal, “The Image of Germany and German Jewry in East European Jewish Society during the 19th Century,” in *Danzig, between East and West: Aspects of Modern Jewish History*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 3–17.

100. Bartal, *Jews of Eastern Europe*, 9; Eliyahu Stern, *Jewish Materialism: The Intellectual Revolution of the 1870s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 182–91.

101. Gabriel Riesser, *Gesammelte Schriften* (1867; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2001), 2:183.

102. Elyada, *Goy Who Speaks Yiddish*, 127–54; Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, 68–86; Efron, *Allure of the Sephardic*, 21–52.
103. Johann Christoph Wagenseil, *Belehrung der Jüdisch-Teutschen Red- und Schreibart* (Königsberg, 1699), introduction (no page numbers). Translation from Elyada, *Goy Who Speaks Yiddish*, 134.
104. Lowenstein, “Complicated Language Situation,” 3–31.
105. Toury, “Die Sprache als Problem,” 82–86.
106. Shermuk, *Yiddish Literature*, 147–48; Michael Meyer, “Becoming German, Remaining Jewish,” *German-Jewish History*, 2:199–208.
107. Hans Peter Althaus, *Mauscheln: Ein Wort als Waffe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002); Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 10–11.
108. Steinthal, *Juden und Judentum*, 79.
109. Ruth HaCohen, *The Music Libel against the Jews* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 1–17.
110. Andrea Schatz, “Hebrew, German, Yiddish and Cultural Difference: The ‘Babylonian Stories’ of the Berlin Haskalah,” in *The Varieties of Haskalah* [in Hebrew], ed. Shmuel Feiner and Israel Bartal (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005), 13–28.
111. For studies that explore the impact of German philosophy on Jewish nationalists, see, for instance, Manfred Voigts, *‘Wir sollen alle kleine Fichtes werden!’ Johann Gottlieb Fichte als Prophet der Kultur-Zionisten* (Berlin: Philo, 2003); Eyal Chowers, *The Political Philosophy of Zionism: Trading Jewish Words for a Hebraic Land* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 94–108, 171–88; Avraham Shapira, “Buber’s Attachment to Herder and German ‘Volkism,’” *Studies in Zionism* 14, no. 1 (1993): 1–30; Vogt, *Subalterne Positionierungen*.
112. Shlomo Na’aman, *Marxismus und Zionismus* (Gerlingen: Bleicher Verlag, 1997).
113. Jacob Golomb, *Nietzsche and Zion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 92–112.
114. Ruth H. Sanders, *German: Biography of a Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 157–74.

## Chapter 2

1. *Autoemancipation! Mahnruf an seine Stammesgenossen von einem russischen Juden* (Berlin, 1882). Apart from several modifications, I use the English translation: Leon Pinsker, *Road to Freedom: Writings and Addresses*, trans. D. S. Blondheim (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1944), 74–106.
2. According to David Gordon, a Lithuanian maskil and editor of the Hebrew periodical *Ha-Magid*, “The sensation that this pamphlet generated in the West, and especially in Germany, is unimaginable.” See Shmuel Leib Zitron, *Anashim vesofrim* (Warsaw: Central, 1922), 53.

3. Sh. Y. Abramovitsh, "A sguleh tsu di yudishe tsores," *Der nitslekber kalendar far di rusishe yidn* (1884): 70–86. For a bibliography of the pamphlet's editions and translations, see Barukh Shuhtman, "Y. L. Pinsker: bibliografia," *Kiryat sefer* 11 (1934–1935): 117–29.

4. Moses Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem: Die letzte Nationalitätsfrage* (Leipzig, 1862).

5. David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 126.

6. Pinsker to Isaac Rülff, Odessa, September 21, 1883, in Julius H. Schoeps, *Palästinaliebe: Leon Pinsker, der Antisemitismus und die Anfänge der nationaljüdischen Bewegung in Deutschland* (Berlin: Philo, 2005), 117–18.

7. Alter Druyanow, ed., *Ketavim le'toldot hibat tsiyon veyishuv erets yisrael* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Ha-kibuts ha-meuhad, 1985), 2:441.

Central Zionist Archives (CZA), A9/175; Alter Druyanow, "Notes for a Biography on Pinsker" [in Hebrew], *Haaretz*, January 1, 1922.

8. Schoeps, *Palästinaliebe*, 30; Vital, *Origins*, 126. However, as John Klier noted, a partial version of the pamphlet was published in Russian in 1882. See John D. Klier, *Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881–1882* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 315.

9. Jörg Requate and Martin Schulze Wessel, "Europäische Öffentlichkeit: Realität und Imagination einer appellativen Instanz," in *Europäische Öffentlichkeit: Transnationale Kommunikation seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jörg Requate and Martin Schulze Wessel (Frankfurt: Campus, 2002), 11–39; Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 29–32; Holly Case, *The Age of Questions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 1–7, 43–45.

10. Tobias Brinkmann, "The Road from Damascus: Transnational Jewish Philanthropic Organizations and the Jewish Mass Migration from Eastern Europe, 1840–1914," in *Shaping the Transnational Sphere: Experts, Networks and Issues from the 1840s to the 1930s*, ed. Davide Rodogno, Bernhard Struck, and Jakob Vogel (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 152–72; François Guesnet, "Strukturwandel im Gebrauch der Öffentlichkeit: Zu einem Aspekt jüdischer politischer Praxis zwischen 1744 und 1881," in *Europäische Öffentlichkeit*, 43–62.

11. Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: "Ritual Murder," Politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

12. Abigail Green, "The Limits of Intervention: Coercive Diplomacy and the Jewish Question in the Nineteenth Century," *International History Review* 36, no. 3 (2014): 473–92.

13. For instance, in 1874, Russian maskil Perets Smolenskin headed a mission organized by the Alliance that sought to investigate the social and economic condition of Romanian Jews to find ways to improve it. Stern, *Jewish Materialism*, 157.

14. Avraham Greenbaum, "Newspapers and Periodicals," *YIVO Encyclopedia*, 2:1260–68.



15. Abigail Green, "Old Networks, New Connections: The Emergence of the Jewish International," in *Religious Internationals in the Modern World: Globalization and Faith Communities since 1750*, ed. Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 53–81.

16. N. M. Gelber, "The Intervention of German Jews at the Berlin Congress 1878," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 5 (1960): 221–48; Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3–38; David Vital, *A People Apart: The Jews in Europe, 1789–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 496–503.

17. Moses Gaster, "Pinsker's *Auto-Emancipation*—A Jubilee," *Views* 1, no. 1 (April 1932): 17–25.

18. Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder, and the Building of the German Empire* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 351–93, especially 375–80.

19. A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 253; Gordon A. Craig, *Germany, 1866–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 110–16.

20. Dmitry Shumsky, *Beyond the Nation-State: The Zionist Political Imagination from Pinsker to Ben-Gurion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 24–49.

21. Leon Pinsker to Isaac Rülff, September 27, 1882, reprinted in Schoeps, *Palästinaliebe*, 103–5.

22. *Autoemancipation*, 5.

23. *Autoemancipation*, 3.

24. *Autoemancipation*, 3. Pinsker used the term *nationale Selbstständigkeit*, which also denotes national autonomy or self-reliance.

25. *Autoemancipation*, 33.

26. *Autoemancipation*, 14. On the genealogy of the idea of self-determination, see Eric D. Weitz, "Self-Determination: How a German Enlightenment Idea Became the Slogan of National Liberation and a Human Right," *American Historical Review* 120, no. 2 (April 2015): 462–96.

27. Case, *Age of Questions*, 58–61.

28. "The goal of our present endeavors must be not the 'Holy Land,' but a land of our own." *Autoemancipation*, 22.

29. Kamusella, *Politics of Language*, 86–91; Gordin, *Scientific Babel*, 163–72.

30. Henry Kahane, "A Typology of the Prestige Language," *Language* 62, no. 3 (September 1986): 495–508.

31. *Autoemancipation*, 19. George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985), 90–113.

32. *Autoemancipation*, 22.

33. *Autoemancipation*, 4, 18, 20.

34. *Autoemancipation*, 4, 12, 16.



35. "The German, proud of his Teutonic character, the Slav, the Celt, not one of them admits that the Semitic Jew is his equal by birth." Pinsker then decried the refusal of Jews to speak in "Aryan" society about their "Semitic" descent. *Autoemancipation*, 9–10.

36. On the history of the Aryan-Semite dichotomy in European philology and historiography, see Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1–20, 37–50.

37. John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 349.

38. Shumsky, *Beyond the Nation-State*, 44.

39. *Autoemancipation*, 12–13.

40. *Autoemancipation*, 18.

41. He called antagonism toward Jews a "power of nature" (*Naturkraft*). *Autoemancipation*, 19.

42. *Autoemancipation*, 3.

43. On Pinsker's view of antisemitism as pathology, see Sander L. Gilman and James M. Thomas, *Are Racists Crazy? How Prejudice, Racism, and Antisemitism Became Markers of Insanity* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 33–41. On the place of science in Zionist thought, see Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 340–47; Noah Efron, "Zionism and the Eros of Science and Technology," *Zygon* 46, no. 2 (June 2011): 413–28; Mitchell B. Hart, ed., *Jews and Race: Writings on Identity and Difference* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011).

44. L. Pinsker, *Die See- und Limanbäder von Odessa* (Vienna, 1881).

45. Ludwig Philippson, "Eine alte Frage: Ein Nachtrag," *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, October 17, 1882.

46. Philippson, 683.

47. [Moritz] Steinschneider, "Judaica," *Hebräische Bibliographie* 128 (March 1883): 123.

48. *Autoemancipation*, 9; *Die Fremdlinge in unsrem Heim! Ein Mahnwort an das deutsche Volk von einem Berliner Bürger* (Berlin, 1877).

49. [Y. L. Gordon], "Bina ba-sfarim," *Ha-Melits*, November 9, 1882; Shmuel Leib Zitron, *Im ein ani li, mi li* (Vilna, 1884), 35.

50. Emma Lazarus, "An Epistle to the Hebrews," *American Hebrew*, December 8, 1882.

51. On scientific language and arguments in discussion of political questions in the nineteenth century, see Case, *Age of Questions*, 167–70; On the prevalence in nineteenth-century Germany of the metaphor of language as a living organism, see Tina Theobald,

*Presse und Sprache im 19. Jahrhundert: Eine Rekonstruktion des zeitgenössischen Diskurses* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012), 126–40.

52. Bartal, *Jews of Eastern Europe*, 143–56. See also Hanan Harif's discussion of maskil and Jewish nationalist Moshe Ayzman: Hanan Harif, *For We Be Brethren: The Turn to the East in Zionist Thought* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 2019), 40–48. Ludwig Philippson noted that *Autoemancipation!* expressed ideas that had been circulating among Russian Jewry, as reported by Meir Feivel Goetz in his essays titled "Letters from Russia." See *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, August 29, 1882, and September 26, 1882.

53. Bartal, *Jews of Eastern Europe*, 151–52.

54. Moses Schrenzel, *Die Lösung der Judenfrage: Allen Angehörigen des jüdischen Stammes zur Beherzigung empfohlen* (Lemberg, 1881). According to N. M. Gelber, "There are a number of similarities between the two pamphlets of Pinsker's and Schrenzel's and basically their ideas are the same. It is likely that Pinsker was somewhat influenced by Schrenzel's writing." See N. M. Gelber, "Dr. Yehuda Leib (Leo) Pinsker: The Sixtieth Anniversary of the Death of Dr. Leo Pinsker," *Zion* 12, no. 1 (June 1952): 45.

55. See [Y. L. Gordon], "Bina ba'sfarim."

56. Joseph Ritter von Wertheimer, *Zur Emancipation unserer Glaubensgenossen* (Vienna, 1882), 2. Both Pinsker and Wertheimer described Jewish history as a "history of suffering" (*Leidensgeschichte*), though Wertheimer drew a clearer distinction between the achievements of Western European Jews and the deplorable condition of Russian Jews.

57. Wertheimer, 26.

58. Abramovitsh, "A sguleh tsu di yudishe tsores," 71.

59. L. Wogue, "La Question Juive—Deux Solutions," *L'Univers Israélite* 12 (1 March 1883): 363.

60. Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), 5.

61. Zipperstein, 40.

62. On the tension between the two images of Odessa in Jewish historical memory—as a center of progressive intellectual productivity, but also as a city indifferent to Enlightenment ideologies—see Brian Horowitz, "Myths and Counter-Myths about Odessa's Jewish Intelligentsia during the Late Tsarist Period," *Jewish Culture and History* 15, no. 3 (2014): 163–72.

63. Zipperstein, *Odessa*, 52–53, 56–57, 86–95; Tobias Grill, "Odessa's German Rabbi—The Paradigmatic Meaning of Simon Leon Schwabacher (1861–1888)," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 2 (2003): 199–222.

64. Alter Druyanow, *Pinsker vezmano* (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1953), 76, 85.

65. Michael Stanislawski, *For Whom Do I Toil? Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 121. According to Stanislawski,

Gordon believed Russian Jews should go through the process German Jews had undergone, “but without making the same mistakes that they did” (30–32). On OPE’s language politics, see also Brian Horowitz, *Jewish Philanthropy and Enlightenment in Late-Tsarist Russia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 29–41.

66. Stanislawski, *For Whom*, 114–17.

67. Joseph Klausner, “Doktor yehuda-leib pinsker,” in *Sefer pinsker*, ed. Joseph Klausner (Jerusalem: Ha-va’ad shel ha’-hevrach le’yishuv erets yisrael be’odesah, 1921), 10; Vital, *Origins of Zionism*, 122.

68. Shumsky, *Beyond the Nation-State*, 36.

69. Shumsky, 48–49. For a list of Pinsker’s publications, including those he published anonymously, see Bella Vernikova, “Atributsiya statei L’va Pinskera v russko-yevreiskoi pečati 1860–1880,” *Vestnik Yevreiskogo Universiteta* 26 (2003): 41–94.

70. On the significance of German as the language of empire in modern Jewish history, see Dan Diner, “Between Empire and Nation State: Outline for a European Contemporary History of the Jews, 1750–1950,” in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, ed. Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 61–80.

71. Kamusella, *Politics of Language*, 437; R. J. W. Evans, “Language and State Building: The Case of the Habsburg Monarchy,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 35 (2004): 1–24; Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*.

72. Kamusella, *Politics of Language*, 47.

73. Michael Bakunin, *Aufruf an die Slaven von einem russischen Patrioten* (Koethen, 1848); Detlef Jena, “Michail Bakunin und der Slawenkongreß 1848 in Prag,” in *The Prague Slav Congress 1848: Slavic Identities*, ed. Horst Haselsteiner (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2000), 81–100.

74. For numerous examples that demonstrate the circulation of similar forms of political rhetoric and argumentation in nineteenth-century Europe, see Case, *Age of Questions*, 35–95, 209–21.

75. Compare “If you do not take advantage of the fleeting moments of repose and devise remedies . . . lasting peace is impossible for you”; “Let ‘now or never!’ be our watchword. Woe to our descendants, woe to the memory of our Jewish contemporaries, if we let this moment pass by!” *Autoemancipation*, 1, 36. Bakunin began by exclaiming: “The time of decision has arrived. . . . The question is whether the future will belong to you, or will you again sink for centuries in the grave of powerlessness.” Bakunin, *Aufruf*, 3.

76. *Autoemancipation*, 2.

77. “It is the holy duty for all of us, fighters of the revolution, democrats of all nations, that we unite our forces, that we agree to congregate and care for each other.” Bakunin, *Aufruf*, 6.

78. *Autoemancipation*, 34.

79. David Sorkin, "Emancipation and Assimilation: Two Concepts and Their Application in German-Jewish History," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 35 (1990): 17–33. On the term's prevalence in German debates since the 1820s, see Jacob Katz, "The Term 'Jewish Emancipation': Its Origin and Historical Impact," in *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History*, 1–25.

80. John D. Klier, "The Concept of 'Jewish Emancipation' in a Russian Context," in *Civil Rights in Imperial Russia*, ed. Olga Crisp and Linda Edmondson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 121–44.

81. Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 155.

82. Simon Dubnow, "Kakaia samoemantsipatsiia nuzhna evreiam?" *Voskhod* (May–June 1883): 219–46, and *Voskhod* (July–August 1883): 1–30.

83. Simon Dubnow, *Buch des Lebens*, trans. Vera Bischoitzky (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 1:188.

84. S. Dubnow, "Samo-emantsipatsiia," *Voskhod* (July–August 1883): 25. Translation from Robert M. Seltzer, *Simon Dubnow's "New Judaism": Diaspora Nationalism and the World History of the Jews* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 71.

85. Seltzer, 71–76; Simon Rabinovitch, *Jewish Rights, National Rites: Nationalism and Autonomy in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 164.

86. Kritikus, "Réflexion sur les juifs, par Isidore Loeb," *Voskhod* 10 (1884): 17. Quoted in Yehuda Slutzky, *Ha-itonut ha-yehudit-rusit ba'me'a ha-tesha-esre* (Jerusalem: Mosad bialik, 1970), 349.

87. Karl Martin Grass and Reinhart Koselleck, "Emanzipation," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1975), 2:191–95.

88. Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 38–43.

89. Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006), 609–19.

90. Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 43.

91. Stern, *Jewish Materialism*, 115.

92. Reinhart Koselleck, "The Limits of Emancipation," in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Presner (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 248–64, here 254.

93. Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 75; Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1995), 32–35.

94. On the metaphor of Jews as ghosts, see Alex Bein, *Die Judenfrage: Biographie eines Weltproblems* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1980), 2:276–77.

95. It is important to bear in mind that Pinsker's plan for Jewish emigration did not pertain to the entirety of Eastern European Jews, but only to that "unassimilable surplus." See *Autoemancipation*, 27.

96. "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1978), 500. According to Pinsker, "The Jews have no other way out of their desperate position . . . , indeed, what have we to lose?" (*Autoemancipation*, 20).

97. Pinsker might have been aware of the text because it had been partially republished in a German social-democratic periodical in 1881. See Jack Jacobs, *On Socialists and "The Jewish Question" after Marx* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 9.

98. David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2013), 433.

99. Nirenberg, 431.

100. Stern, *Jewish Materialism*, 184.

101. *Autoemancipation*, 6, 16.

102. Jacob Talmon, *Riddle of the Present and the Cunning of History* [in Hebrew], ed. David Ohana (1978; Jerusalem: Mosad bialik, 2000), 71–72.

103. Ehud Luz, *Parallels Meet: Religion and Nationalism in the Early Zionist Movement, 1882–1904*, trans. Lenn J. Schramm (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988); Lederhendler, *Jewish Responses to Modernity*, 23–46.

104. "Bina ba'sfarim," *Ha-Melits*, November 9, 1882.

105. Shmuel Leib Zitron, "Et sofrim," *Ha-Magid*, November 8, 15, 22, and 29, and December 6 and 13, 1882.

106. Moshe Leib Lilienblum, "Giluy Milta," *Ha-Magid*, March 20, 1884.

107. Zitron, *Anashim*, 57.

108. Zitron, 57–58.

109. Avraham Levinson, *Kitve avraham levinson* (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 1956), 144–45.

110. [Perets Smolenskin], "Yedi'at sfarim," *Ha-Shabar* 3 (1883): 185.

111. [Smolenskin], 185–86.

112. [Smolenskin], 186.

113. J. Rülff, *Aruchas Bas-Ammi, Israels Heilung: Ein ernstes Wort an Glaubens- und Nichtglaubensgenossen* (Frankfurt, 1883).

114. On Pinsker's activity in Hibbat Zion and the ambivalent legacy of his leadership, see Steven J. Zipperstein, "Representations of Leadership (and Failure) in Russian Zionism: Picturing Leon Pinsker," in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. Jehuda Reinhartz and Anita Shapira (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 191–209.

115. Druyanow, *Ketavim le'toldot*, 2:487.
116. "A[1] d[var] asefat hovevei tsiyon be'katovits," *Ivri anokhi*, January 16, 1885, 115–17.
117. *Ivri anokhi*, 115.
118. *Ivri anokhi*, 115–16.
119. *Ivri anokhi*, 116.
120. Druyanow, *Ketavim le'toldot*, 3:141–42.
121. Druyanow, 3:153–54.
122. Druyanow, 3:153–54. See also 2:486.
123. "He'ara ve'he'ara," *Ha-Magid*, February 26, 1885, 72; "He'ara ve'he'ara," *Ha-Melits*, February 27, 1885, 208.
124. Ludwig Rosenhek, *Festschrift zur Feier des 100. Semesters der akademischen Verbindung Kadimah* (Vienna: Self-published, 1933), 41; Jess Olson, *Nathan Birnbaum and Jewish Modernity: Architect of Zionism, Yiddishism, and Orthodoxy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 43–46.
125. Moshe Zimmermann, "German Jews and the Jewish Emigration from Russia" [in Hebrew], in *Solidariyut yehudit leumit ba'et ha-hadasha*, ed. Benjamin Pinkus and Ilan Troen (Beer-Sheva: Ben Gurion University Press, 1988), 116–26.
126. *Was soll aus den russischen Juden werden?* (Berlin, 1891); Israel Klausner, *Mikato-vits ad bazel* (Jerusalem: Ha-histadrut ha-tsiyonit, 1964), 2:102–8.
127. National Library of Israel (NLI), ARC. 4° 791 7 1887.

### Chapter 3

1. Shlomo Breiman, ed., *Sefer Smolenskin* (Jerusalem: Ahiasaf, 1952), 100, 88, 61.
2. In a letter to scholar David Kaufmann, Smolenskin wrote: "I am not ashamed to admit that I love my people more than my faith, and if one were to speak positively or negatively of the Jewish faith [*emunat yisrael*], I would pay no attention to it, unlike with regard to my people." Perets Smolenskin, *Meah mikhtavim* (Vilna: Verlag von M. Katzenellenbogen, 1905), 28.
3. Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 350–55.
4. Joseph Klausner, *Historiyah shel ha-sifrut ha-ivrit ha-hadashah* (Jerusalem: Ahiasaf, 1955), 5:39–41.
5. Klausner, 5:51–58.
6. Joshua Shanes, *Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish Identity in Habsburg Galicia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 34–40; Gerald Stourzh, *Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten in der Verfassung und Verwaltung Österreichs 1848–1918* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1985), 53–91.
7. Mitchell G. Ash and Jan Surman, "The Nationalization of Scientific Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Central Europe: An Introduction," in *The Nationalization of*

*Scientific Knowledge in the Habsburg Empire, 1848–1918*, ed. Mitchell G. Ash and Jan Surman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 6–8.

8. Jan Surman, “Science and its Publics: Internationality and National Languages in Central Europe,” *Nationalization of Scientific Knowledge*, 30–56.

9. “Hote ehad ye’abed tova harbe,” *Ha-Shahar* 1, no. 2 (1868): 3–7.

10. Perets Smolenskin, “Petah davar,” *Ha-Shahar* 1, no. 1 (1868): vi; Perets Smolenskin, “Et La’asot,” *Hamisha ma’amarei bikoret* (1873; Vilna: Katsenelson, 1914), 281–83; Tudor Parfitt, “Smolenskin and the Revival of Hebrew Education,” in *Jewish Education and Learning*, ed. Glenda Abramson and Tudor Parfitt (Chur: Harwood, 1994), 2–3.

11. Klausner, *Historiyah*, 5:88–104; Shmuel Feiner, “Kfirato shel smolenskin ba’haskalah ve’shorshei ha-historyografia ha-yehudit ha-le’umit,” *Ha-Tsiyonut* 16 (1991): 9–31; Shmuel Feiner, “Perets Smolenskin,” *YIVO Encyclopedia*, 2:1765–67. See also Reuven Brainin, *Perets ben moshe smolenskin: hayav u’sefarav* (Warsaw, 1896).

12. Isaac E. Barzilay, “Smolenskin’s Polemic against Mendelssohn in Historical Perspective,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 53 (1986): 11–48.

13. Barzilay, 48. On Smolenskin’s intellectual trajectory and relations with Jewish socialist thinkers, see Stern, *Jewish Materialism*, 147–81.

14. Perets Smolenskin, *Ma’amarim* (Jerusalem: Keren Smolenskin, 1925), 2:72.

15. Smolenskin, “Et la’asot,” *Hamisha*, 308.

16. Smolenskin, *Ma’amarim*, 2:72.

17. Smolenskin, *Ma’amarim*, 2:73–74.

18. Smolenskin, *Ma’amarim*, 2:76. See also 92–94.

19. Luz, *Parallels Meet*, 21–23.

20. Sh. I. Hurwitz, *Tsiyun lenefesh rabenu nahman ha-koben krehmal* (Warsaw, 1887), 11–12.

21. Hillel ben Shahar (pseud.), “Ha-sifrut ha-ivrit be’erets yisrael,” *Ha-Magid*, November 28, 1895.

22. “Et la’akor natu’a,” *Ha-Boker Or* 6 (1876): 9. On the quarrel between Smolenskin and Gottlober, see Klausner, *Historiyah*, 5:350–54; Barzilay, “Smolenskin’s Polemic,” 11–48.

23. Moses Gaster, “Rede,” *Ha-Shahar* 11 (June 1873): 1–5.

24. Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), 324.

25. Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther im Spiegel der deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 47; Rudolf Speth, *Nation und Revolution: Politische Mythen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2000), 239–41; Hedda Gramley, *Propheten des deutschen Nationalismus: Theologen, Historiker und Nationalökonom* (1848–1880) (Frankfurt: Campus, 2001), 88–96.

26. In this respect, Smolenskin was voicing similar ideas to those entertained by German Jewish theologians and writers in the nineteenth century. For a discussion of



the German Jewish reception of Luther, see Christian Wiese, "Let His Memory Be Holy to Us!": Jewish Interpretations of Martin Luther from the Enlightenment to the Holocaust," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 54 (2009): 93–126.

27. Smolenskin, *Hamisha*, 278–80.

28. Smolenskin, *Ma'amarim* 2:48.

29. Smolenskin, *Ma'amarim*, 2:83.

30. Russian maskil Pesach Ruderman argued that Mendelssohn liberated his brethren from the yoke of traditional rabbinical authority, "just as Luther liberated his brethren from the yoke of the Holy Fathers." Pesah Ruderman, "Le'ma'an yed'u," *Ha-Shahar* 7 (1876): 65–80, here 74–75. Translation from Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, 337.

31. In 1834, Heinrich Heine ascribed to Mendelssohn the same historical role that Luther had in German history: "As Luther overthrew the Papacy, so Mendelssohn overthrew the Talmud; and that, too, by a similar process. He discarded tradition, declared the Bible to be the wellspring of religion, and translated the most important parts of it. By so doing he destroyed Jewish Catholicism, for such is the Talmud." Heinrich Heine, *Religion and Philosophy in Germany: A Fragment*, trans. John Snodgrass (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 94.

32. Lederhendler, *Jewish Responses to Modernity*, 23–46.

33. Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, 326–33.

34. Perets Smolenskin, "Petah davar," *Ha-Shahar* 1, no. 1 (1869): iii.

35. Smolenskin, "Am olam," *Hamisha*, 250.

36. Smolenskin, "Et lata'at," *Ma'amarim*, 2:235.

37. Smolenskin, *Ma'amarim*, 2:154–55.

38. Smolenskin, *Ma'amarim*, 2:236.

39. Heinrich Graetz, *Schir ha-Schirim, oder das Salomonische Hohelied* (Vienna, 1871).

40. Smolenskin, "Mishpat haruts," *Hamisha*, 70.

41. Smolenskin, *Hamisha*, 101–2.

42. Adolf Jellinek, *Der jüdische Stamm: ethnographische Studien* (Vienna, 1869).

43. Smolenskin, "Even yisrael," *Hamisha*, 22–23.

44. D. D. K. N., "Mishpat bnei shem," *Ha-Shahar* 4 (1873): 246–48.

45. A similar approach appeared in the Hebrew journal *Knesset Israel*. A reviewer commented on Joseph Bloch, an Austrian rabbi and scholar, "whose name is well known to the Hebrew reader," but who had now "published in a living language, the German language, so that Christians could see too that the people of Jacob may be small in size, but not in stance and morality." Wolff Schor, "Aus der Vergangenheit für die Gegenwart, Social und literarhistorische Vorträge und Essays von Dr. J. S. Bloch," *Knesset Israel*, 1886, 219.

46. Smolenskin, "Et la'asot," *Hamisha*, 284–86.

47. Miron, *A Traveler Disguised*, 34–42.



48. Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 49–51.
49. Klausner, *Historiyah*, 5:161–62.
50. Olson, *Birnbaum and Jewish Modernity*, 47–48.
51. Ela Bauer, *Between Poles and Jews: The Development of Nahum Sokolow's Political Thought* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005), 16–17.
52. Shoshana Anish Stifftel, *The Mediator: Nahum Sokolow's leadership between tradition and Zionism* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Zionist Library, 2012), 62–76.
53. "Petah ha-sha'ar," *Ha-Asif* 1 (1884): 2.
54. "Kol mevaser," 7. Reprinted in Nahum Sokolow, *Be'mar'ot ha-keshet* (Jerusalem: Zionist Library, 1962), 573–81.
55. "Kol mevaser," 7.
56. "Yediot ha-teva," *Ha-Asif* 1:227–29.
57. Ha-orekh, "Otsar hokhmat yisrael," *Ha-Asif* 4 (1887): 74–75.
58. Stanley Nash, *In Search of Hebraism: Shai Hurwitz and His Polemics in the Hebrew Press* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 65–66.
59. Hurwitz, *Tsiyun*, 21–23.
60. N. S., "Ha-Mitspe," *Ha-Asif* 3 (1886): 480.
61. *Berakhot*, 8a.
62. Another invocation of the difference between the languages appeared in an editorial published in *Ha-Melits* in 1891. The author praised the rise of "scientific national literature" in Germany while arguing that the scholarly prevalence of German among Eastern European Jews could not persist because "the spirit of Israel is remote from a language whose writings are lengthy and continuous." "Sifrutenu ha-mada'it," *Ha-Melits*, May 5, 1891.
63. Shimon Bernfeld, "Sefer ha-yovelim," *Ha-Asif* 5 (1889): 24.
64. Bernfeld, 79.
65. Bernfeld, 80.
66. Dov Schwartz, *Faith at the Crossroads: A Theological Profile of Religious Zionism*, trans. Batya Stein (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 156–92.
67. Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (London: Peter Halban, 1988); Robert S. Wistrich, *Laboratory for World Destruction: Germans and Jews in Central Europe* (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon Center; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 325–51; Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 116–80.
68. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, 209–19; Bering, "Jews and the German Language," 251–91.
69. Moshe Zimmermann, *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Anti-Semitism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 70–95.

70. Heinrich von Treitschke, "Unsere Aussichten," in *Der "Berliner Antisemitismusstreit" 1879–1881: Eine Kontroverse um die Zugehörigkeit der deutschen Juden zur Nation. Kommentierte Quellenedition*, ed. Karsten Krieger (1879; Munich: K. G. Saur, 2004), 15; Uffa Jensen, *Gebildete Doppelgänger: Bürgerliche Juden und Protestanten im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 197–324, here 210–19; Marcel Stoetzler, *The State, The Nation, and the Jews: liberalism and the anti-Semitism dispute in Bismarck's Germany* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

71. Abramovitsh, "A sguleh tsu di yudishe tsorens," 71.

72. "Lo titgodedu," *Ha-Melits*, September 23, 1890.

73. Yehuda Leib Landa, "Yisrael ben he-amim: hozei hezionot be'sfat ashkenaz," *Ha-Eshkol* 1 (1898): 44.

74. Jehuda Reinharz, "Shorshe ha-politizatsya shel ha-tsiyonut ba'tfutsot," in *Leumiyyut ve'politika yehudit*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz, Gideon Shimoni, and Yosef Salmon (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1996), 93–113.

75. Olson, *Nathan Birnbaum and Jewish Modernity*, 60–61.

76. Shmuel Almog, *Zionism and History: The Rise of a New Jewish Consciousness* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 84–176; Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture*, 40–76.

77. Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat: Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage* (Leipzig; Vienna: M. Breitenstein, 1896), 75. Translation from Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question*, trans. Sylvie d'Avigdor and Israel Cohen (New York: Scopus, 1943), 100.

78. Theodor Herzl, *Zionistisches Tagebuch 1895–1899*, ed. Johannes Wachten and Chaya Harel (Berlin: Ullstein, 1983), 2:90; Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture*, 51.

79. "Herzl's linguistic vision . . . proposed to continue the Jews' enlightenment through the medium of European languages, but to do so in a homeland far removed from Europe." Shumsky, *Beyond the Nation-State*, 78.

80. M. Berkowicz, "Von meinen Besuchen bei Herzl," *Zeitgenossen über Herzl*, ed. T. Nussenblatt (Brno: Jüdischer Buch und Kunstverlag, 1929), 29–32; Yoseph Lang, *Daber Iwrit! Hayey Eliezer Ben-Yehuda* (Jerusalem: Yad yitshak ben tsvi, 2008), 349; Student mi-levov (anonymous), "Mikhtavim me-vin," *Ha-Magid*, June 11, 1896.

81. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 81.

82. Mordekhai Ehrenpreis, "Lean?," *Ha-Shiloah* 1 (1897): 489–503; Marcus Ehrenpreis, "Die junghebräische Literatur," *Die Welt*, July 16, 1897, 14–16.

83. Nahman Syrkin, "Letoldot ha-tsiyonut ha-sotsyalistit," in *Kitve nahman sirkin* (Tel Aviv: Davar, 1938), 291.

84. I. Niemirower, "Eine moderne Jabnehakademie," *Lumea Israelitā* 1 (October 1902): 7.

85. Gelber, *Melancholy Pride*, 52.

86. Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture*, 16.

87. Berkowitz, 20; Shlomo Avineri, *Herzl: Theodor Herzl and the Foundation of the Jewish State* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2013), 102.

88. Leib Jaffe, ed., *Sefer ha-kongres: limlot hamishim shana la'kongres ha-tsiyoni ha-rishon* (Jerusalem: Ha-sokhnut ha-yehudit, 1947), 417.

89. Isaak Ben Zvi, "The Meaning of the First Zionist Congress," *The Jubilee of the First Zionist Congress, 1897–1947*, ed. World Zionist Organization (Jerusalem: Executive of the Zionist Organization, 1947), 28–31, here 31.

90. Michael Berkowitz, "February 1896. Publication of Theodor Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* begins a diverse tradition in Central Europe of Zionist Writing in German," in *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096–1996*, ed. Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 227–31, here 229.

91. *Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des III. Zionisten-Congresses, Basel, 15. bis 18. August 1899* (Vienna, 1899), 202.

92. Israel Cohen, *A Jewish Pilgrimage: The Autobiography of Israel Cohen* (London: Valentine, Mitchell, 1956), 29. See also Shmarya Levin, *Forward from Exile*, trans. Maurice Samuel (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1967), 370–74.

93. Leib Jaffe, *Bisbelibut am: mikhtavim ute'udot* (Jerusalem: Ha-sifriya ha-tsiyonit, 1968), 263.

94. Cohen, *Jewish Pilgrimage*, 29.

95. *Zionisten-Congress in Basel (29. 30. und 31. August 1897): Officieles Protocoll* (Vienna, 1898), 39.

96. *Stenographisches Protokoll 1899*, 42.

97. *Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des IV. Zionisten-Congresses in London 13., 14., 15. und 16. August 1900* (Vienna: Verlag des Vereines "Erez Israel," 1900), 62.

98. *Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des V. Zionisten-Congresses in Basel, 26., 27., 28., 29. und 30. December 1901* (Vienna: Verlag des Vereines "Erez Israel," 1901), 354–55.

99. *Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des II. Zionisten-Congresses gehalten zu Basel vom 28. Bis 31. August 1898* (Vienna, 1898), 72–73.

100. *Stenographisches Protokoll 1898*, 94.

101. *Stenographisches Protokoll 1898*, 181. For other examples: *Zionisten-Congress 1897*, 168; *Stenographisches Protokoll 1898*, 130, 238; *Stenographisches Protokoll 1899*, 40; *Stenographisches Protokoll 1900*, 185, 221; *Stenographisches Protokoll 1901*, 201, 422; *Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des VI. Zionisten-Kongresses in Basel 23., 24., 25., 26., 27. und 28. August 1903* (Vienna: Verlag des Vereines "Erez Israel," 1903), 14, 57, 59, 176, 179, 280, 281. See also *Stenographisches Protokoll 1898*, 172.

102. *Stenographisches Protokoll 1898*, 133.

103. Ivonne Meybohm, *David Wolffsohn: Aufsteiger, Grenzgänger, Mediator* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 28–29, 119.
104. “Der vierte Zionistencongress,” *Krakauer jüdische Zeitung* 1, no. 23 (Juli 1900): 5.
105. Yosef Luria, “Be’shulei mahalakho shel ha-kongres,” *Sefer ha-kongres*, 154–62, here 161.
106. Zeev Jabotinsky, *Zikhronot ben-dori* (Tel Aviv: Amihai, 1958), 37–38.
107. Zeev Jabotinsky, *Avtobiografia* (Jerusalem: Eri Jabotinsky, 1946), 48–49.
108. Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle*, 161–62.
109. David Patterson, “Ahad Ha-Am and Smolenskin,” in *At the Crossroads: Essays on Ahad Ha-Am*, ed. Jacques Kornberg (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 36–45.
110. Jacques Kornberg, “At the Crossroads: An Introductory Essay,” in *At the Crossroads*, xvi.
111. Ahad Ha-Am, “Altneuland,” *Kol kitve ahad ha-am* (Jerusalem: Dvir, 1964), 318; Achad Haam, “Altneuland,” *Ost und West* 4 (April 1903): 227–44.
112. Shulamit Laskov, “Ha-riv al odot altneuland,” *Ha-Tsionut* 15 (1990): 37–38; Max Nordau, “Achad-Haam über Altneuland,” *Die Welt*, March 13, 1903, 1–5.
113. Nordau, 2.
114. Nordau, 2–3.
115. Nordau, 3.
116. Herzl, *Judenstaat*, 75; Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 5–6. In 1897, Herzl (under a pseudonym) used the derogatory term *Mauschel* to attack Jewish opponents of Zionism. Benjamin Seff, “Mauschel,” *Die Welt*, October 15, 1897, 1–2.
117. Max Nordau, *Zionistische Schriften* (Cologne, Leipzig: Jüdischer Verlag, 1909), 24–25.
118. Ahad Ha-Am, “Ha-het ve’onsho,” *Ha-Zman*, April 7, 1903.
119. Max Nordau to Joseph Massel, September 7, 1899, NLI, V 508/39.
120. Max Nordau, “Ha-ide’al ha-nitsrakh,” *Ha-Tsivi*, October 27, 1897. See German version in *Zionistische Schriften*, 282–83.
121. Max Nordau, “La renaissance de la littérature hébraïque,” *Die Welt*, April 24, 1903, 12–13.
122. In non-Hebrew journals, Ahad Ha-Am used the form of “a letter to the editor,” so as to avoid the impression that it was an ordinary essay published in a foreign language. Tudor Parfitt, “Ahad Ha-Am’s Role in the Revival and Development of Hebrew,” in *At the Crossroads*, 21.
123. Yaacov Golomb, “Al ha-pulmus ‘ha-nitshe’ani’ ben ahad ha-am le’mikha yosef berdyczewski,” in *Misaviv la’nekuda*, ed. Avner Holtzman, Gideon Katz, and Shalom Ratsabi (Beer Sheva: Ben Gurion Institute, 2008), 69–94.

124. Ahad Ha-Am to Hillel Zeitlin, June 15, 1899, *Igrot Ahad Ha-Am* (Jerusalem: Yavneh, Moria, 1923), 2:79–80.

125. Ahad Ha-Am, “Pirkei zikhronot,” *Kol kitve*, 466–67, 495.

## Chapter 4

1. Israel Bartal, “From Traditional Bilingualism to National Monolingualism,” in *Hebrew in Ashkenaz*, 141–50.

2. Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 136–38.

3. Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 134–43.

4. For a study of the diverse socioeconomic background of the “Second Aliyah,” see Gur Alroey, *An Unpromising Land: Jewish Migration to Palestine in the Early Twentieth Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), in particular 111–20.

5. Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution*, 110–12; Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew*, 93–120; Boaz Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism*, trans. Haim Watzman (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 150–79.

6. Pilowsky, *Yidish ve’sifruta*, 1–2.

7. Lang, *Daber ivrit!*, 588–93.

8. Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 155–58; Dmitrii Elyashevich, “A Note on the Jewish Press and Censorship during the First Russian Revolution,” in *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia’s Jews*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn and Stefani Hoffman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 49–54.

9. Scott Ury, *Barricades and Banners: The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 141–71; Veidlinger, *Jewish Public Culture*; Barry Trachtenberg, *The Revolutionary Roots of Modern Yiddish, 1903–1917* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 20–45; Joshua D. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality: The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in Late Tsarist Russia, 1892–1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 227–54.

10. Dan Miron, *Bodedim be’mo’adam* (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 1987), 44–55.

11. Shmuel Werses, *Milashon el lashon* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), 453–87; Kalman Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 81–82.

12. Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 109–25, 133–34.

13. Lang, *Daber ivrit!*, 721–66; Moshe Rinott, “The Zionist Organization and the Hilfsverein: Cooperation and Conflict (1901–1914),” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 21 (1976): 261–78.

14. Tsvi Woyslawski, *Yehidim bi’reshut ha-rabim* (Jerusalem: Kiryat sefer, 1956), 206–12, here 210.

15. Mikhah Yosef Bin-Goryon, *Ma'amarim* (Leipzig: Avraham Yosef Shtibel, 1921), 53–63, here 62–63. Appeared originally in *Ha-Boker*, January 15 and 17, 1909.
16. Aham Ha-Am to Bernfeld, February 19, 1899, *Igrot abad ha-am*, 2:38–40.
17. Isidore Singer and Peter Wiernik, “Bernfeld, Simon,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1903), 3:93.
18. Joseph Klausner, “Ehad me'amudei sifrutenu,” *Ha-Masbkif*, March 15, 1940.
19. See Bernfeld's autobiographical notes on Lemberg Jews in: Simon Bernfeld, “Zikhronot,” *Reshumot* 4 (1925): 145–93, here 170. On the Jewish community of Lwow and its cultural orientation see Ezra Mendelsohn, “Jewish Assimilation in Lvov: The Case of Wilhelm Feldman,” *Slavic Review* 28, no. 4 (December 1969): 577–90; Shanes, *Diaspora Nationalism*, 16–30.
20. Until 1883 this seminary was called Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums.
21. Arndt Engelhardt, *Arsenale jüdischen Wissens: Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der “Encyclopaedia Judaica”* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 87–89; “Bernfeld, Simon,” in *Lexikon deutsch-jüdischer Autoren*, ed. Renate Heuer (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1993), 261–71.
22. Shimon Bernfeld, “Menihe ha-lashon,” *Ha-Tsfira*, March 19, 1912.
23. Letter from Shimon Bernfeld, August 21, 1895, NLI, Abraham Schwadron Collection, Schwad 01 02 450.
24. Shimon Bernfeld, “Ha-sifrut ha-ivrit be'hurbana,” *Hed Ha-Zman*, December 14, 1909. Emphasis in original.
25. Shimon Bernfeld, *Dor tahapukhot* (Warsaw, 1897), 97.
26. Shimon Bernfeld, *Dor hakham* (Warsaw, 1896), 32.
27. Simon Bernfeld, “Literarische Jahresrevue,” *Jahrbuch für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* 14 (1911): 21.
28. Bernfeld, *Dor hakham*, 61.
29. Shimon Bernfeld, “Ha-sifrut ha-ivit be'lashon ivrit,” *Ha-Shiloah* 17, no. 4 (October 1907): 296–304, here 299.
30. Engelhardt, *Arsenale jüdischen Wissens*, 49, 218–21, 250.
31. Mordechai Eran and Yaacov Shavit, “‘Tanakh yehudi be'germanit’—tirgum ha-tanakh le'germanit al-yede shimon bernfeld (1903): bein meh'kar ‘kofer’ le'tirgum ‘shamrani,’” *Beit Mikra* 54, no. 2 (2009): 121–52, here 128–31. On Jewish responses to Bible criticism, see Shavit and Eran, *Hebrew Bible Reborn*, 85–155.
32. Simon Bernfeld, *Die Heilige Schrift: nach dem masoretischen Text neu übersetzt und erklärt nebst einer Einleitung* (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1902); Shavit and Eran, “Tanakh yehudi,” 127–28. See also Hans-Joachim Bechtoldt, *Jüdische deutsche Bibelübersetzungen vom ausgehenden 18. bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005), 526–41.

33. W. Gunther Plaut, *German-Jewish Bible Translations: Linguistic Ideology as a Political Phenomenon* (New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1992), 14.

34. Shimon Bernfeld, "Hag ha-biblia," *Ha-Tyfra*, April 6, 1911.

35. Historians Derek Penslar and Till van Rahden have pointed to how Jews in Germany and Austria-Hungary used the term *Stamm* (tribe, ethnic group) to designate Jewish particularity while emphasizing its belonging to the German imperial and cultural realm. Both in Germany and in the Habsburg Empire authors often described the state as comprised of different *Stämme*. Penslar, *Shylock's Children*, 135–37; Till van Rahden, "Germans of the Jewish *Stamm*: Visions of Community between Nationalism and Particularism, 1850 to 1933," in *German History from the Margins*, ed. Neil Gregor, Nils Roemer, and Mark Roseman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 27–48.

36. Bernfeld, "Hag ha-biblia."

37. This view also appeared in an article written by Yehoshua Redler-Feldman (under the pen-name Rabbi Binyamin) published in January 1907 in Yosef Haim Brenner's *Ha-Meorer*. The author praised German character and Nordic mythology, and asserted: "Goethe and Bismarck did not live and were not created only for their people, but for many other peoples as well. And for us too." The unification of Germany seemed to a degree "like the unification of the tribes of Israel in the days of Shmuel, Saul, and David." In a reply to Brenner's objections, Redler-Feldman added that "our period resembles greatly the German period." R. Binyamin, "Aku"m. Ha-adam betor elohut, II" *Ha-Meorer* 2 (February 1907): 50; R. Binyamin, "Korespondentsiya," *Ha-Meorer* 3 (March 1907): 132–33. On Rabbi Binyamin's cultural ideology, see Harif, *For We Be Brethren* [Hebrew], 95–190.

38. Natan Efrati, *Milesbon yehidim li'leshon uma* (Jerusalem: Hebrew Academy, 2004), 95–107; Or, *Creating a Style* [Hebrew].

39. Shimon Bernfeld, "Menihe ha-lashon," *Ha-Tyfra*, March 19, 1912.

40. H. A. Zuta, "He'ara me'et va'ad ha-lashon," *Ha-Tyfra*, May 1, 1912.

41. A. Masie, "Maznihe ha-lashon," *Ha-Tyfra*, May 17, 1912.

42. A. Masie, "Maznihe ha-lashon," *Ha-Tyfra*, May 19, 1912.

43. Shimon Bernfeld, "Al harhavat ha-safa," *Ha-Tyfra*, May 31, 1912, and June 2, 1912.

44. Bernfeld, "Al harhavat," May 31, 1912.

45. Shimon Bernfeld, *Heshbona shel sifrutenu* (Warsaw, 1899), 4.

46. Shimon Bernfeld, "Thiyat ha-safa biymeit ha-beinayim," *Ha-Safa* 1 (1912): 19.

47. Bernfeld, *Heilige Schrift*, xxi.

48. Bernfeld. *Heilige Schrift*, xxii. German Jewish scholar Schalom Ben-Chorin argued, on the other hand, that Bernfeld's translation lacked a sufficient *Sprachgefühl* for German. Schalom Ben-Chorin, "Jüdische Bibelübersetzungen in Deutschland," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 4 (1959): 322–23.

49. Bernfeld, *Heilige Schrift*, xxiii



50. Bernfeld, xxiii–xxiv.
51. Bernfeld, xxviii.
52. “Literarische Mittheilungen,” *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, March 29, 1901; Josef Meisl, “Dr. Simon Bernfeld (zu seinem 60. Geburtstag),” *Ost und West* (January–February 1920): 41–46, here 44.
53. Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 223–58; Ben-Chorin, “Bibelübersetzungen,” 311; Johannes Zachhuber, *Theology as Science in Nineteenth-Century Germany: From F. C. Baur to Ernst Troeltsch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
54. Gillman, *German Jewish Bible Translation*; Seidman, *Faithful Renderings*, 153–98; Frederick E. Greenspahn, “How Jews Translate the Bible,” in *Biblical Translation in Context*, ed. Frederick W. Knobloch (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 2002), 43–61, here 55.
55. David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 25.
56. Daniel Weidner, “‘Das große Problem bleibt hier die Sprache.’ Jüdische Autoren und deutsche Sprachkultur in der Bibelwissenschaft und Religionsgeschichte,” in *Sprache, Erkenntnis und Bedeutung*, 37–53; Susannah Heschel’s foreword in Christian Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine Germany* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), xv.
57. *Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des VII. Zionisten-Kongresses in Haag vom 14. bis inklusive 21. August 1907* (Cologne: Juedischer Verlag, 1907), 336–40.
58. *Stenographisches Protokoll 1907*, 336.
59. Hannah Holtschneider, “Salis Daiches—Toward a Portrait of a Scottish Rabbi,” *Jewish Culture and History* 16, no. 2 (2015): 142–56.
60. *Stenographisches Protokoll 1907*, 337.
61. Michael Berkowitz, “The Debate about Hebrew, in German: The *Kulturfrage* in the Zionist Congresses, 1897–1914,” in *Insiders and Outsiders: Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria*, ed. Dagmar C. G. Lorenz and Gabriele Weinberger (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 109–15, here 110.
62. *Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des X. Zionisten-Kongresses in Basel vom 9. bis inklusive 15. August 1911* (Berlin, Leipzig: Kommission beim Juedischen Verlag, 1911), 265.
63. *Stenographisches Protokoll 1911*, 210–11.
64. *Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des XI. Zionisten-Kongresses in Basel vom 2. bis 9. September 1913* (Berlin, Leipzig: Kommission beim Juedischen Verlag, 1914), 317.
65. Nash, *In Search of Hebraism*, 285–92; Meirav Reuveny, “A Hebraist in Berlin: Shai Ish Hurwitz, Historical Consciousness and Hebrew Language Revival,” [in Hebrew], *Zion* 83, no. 1 (2018): 71–105; Avraham Levinson, *Ha-tenua ha-ivrit ba’gola* (Warsaw: Executive of Brit Ivrit Olamit, 1935), 19–26.



66. *Din veheshbon shel ha'veida la'safa ve'la'tarbut ha-ivrit be'berlin* (Warsaw: Histadruth lesafa vetarbut ivrit, 1910), 31–32.

67. Martin Buber, “Die hebräische Sprache und der Kongress für hebräische Kultur,” *Martin Bubers Werkausgabe: frühe jüdische Schriften 1900–1922*, ed. Barbara Schäfer (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007), 211. Translation from Martin Buber, “The Hebrew Language,” *The First Buber: Youthful Zionist Writings of Martin Buber*, ed. and trans. Gilya G. Schmidt (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 198–206, here 198. For the Hebrew version, see *Din ve'heshbon*, 12–13.

68. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, “She'ela nikhbada,” *Ha-Shahar* 9 (March–April 1879): 359–66. For a discussion of Ben-Yehuda's early views of the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language, see George Mandel, “*Sheelah Nikhbadah* and the revival of Hebrew,” in *Eliezer Ben Yehuda: A Symposium in Oxford*, ed. Eisig Silberschlag (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1981), 25–39.

69. Reuven Mirkin, “Prakim be'toldot ha-milonut ha-ivrit ha-hadasha, ma'amar sheni,” *Leshonenu* 54 (1990): 311–23.

70. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, *Ha-mavo ha-gadol* (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at ha-makor, 1980), 2.

71. Ben-Yehuda, 208.

72. Jacob Grimm, Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1854); Ulrike Hass-Zumkehr, “Das *deutsche* Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm als Nationaldenkmal,” in *Nation und Sprache*, 229–46.

73. Ben-Yehuda, *Ha-mavo ha-gadol*, 17.

74. Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, xii.

75. Ben-Yehuda, *Ha-mavo ha-gadol*, 29; Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, xxxiii.

76. Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew*, 213–15.

77. E. B. Y., “Off . . .,” *Hashkafa*, May 4, 1906.

78. Efrati, *Mileshon yehidim*, 112–16.

79. Jonathan Marc Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors: Religion, Race, and the Early Zionist-Arab Encounter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 195–98; Moshe Behar, “1911: The Birth of the Mizrahi-Ashkenazi Controversy,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 16, no. 2 (2017): 312–31.

80. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 229–31; Nissim Malul, “Ma'amadenu ba'arets,” *Ha-Herut*, June 17 and 19, 1913.

81. *Din ve'heshbon shel ha-veida la'safa ve'la'tarbut ha-ivrit be'vina* (Warsaw: Ha-Tsfira, 1914), 47.

82. *Din ve'heshbon*, 52.

83. *Din ve'heshbon*, 44–45.

84. Klausner advocated immediate response, whereas David Florentin, the leader of the Thessaloniki Zionist branch, held that until Hebrew was ready to serve as a sci-

tific language, German must be seen as a legitimate language of instruction. Shmaryahu Levin, who was one of the leaders of the “Language War,” urged his colleagues to support a compromise with the Hilfsverein and not to be driven by hatred and radicalism. *Din ve’heshbon*, 49.

85. Paul Nathan, *Palästina und palästinensischer Zionismus* (Berlin: H. S. Hermann, 1914), 4.

86. Isaiah Friedman, “The Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden, the German Foreign Ministry and the Controversy with the Zionists, 1901–1918,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 24 (1979): 291–319, here 304.

87. Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew*, 227–28.

88. Shmaryahu Levin, *Igrot shmaryahu levin: mi’vhar* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1966), 245, 288.

89. E. Ben-Yehuda, “Ha-shana ha-ivrit,” *Ha-Or*, July 10, 1914.

90. Liora R. Halperin, “Other Tongues: The Place of Lo’azit in Hebrew Culture,” in *Reflections on Knowledge and Language in Middle Eastern Societies*, ed. Bruno De Nicola, Yonatan Mendel, and Husain Qutbuddin (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 228–47, here 234–35.

91. Na’ama Sheffi, *Germanit be’ivrit: tirgumim mi’germanit ba’yishuv ha-ivri, 1882–1948* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak ben Zvi and Leo Baeck Institute, 1998), 39–45.

92. Levin to Ahad Ha-Am, July 4, 1913, *Igrot shmaryahu levin*, 247–50.

93. Achad Haam, “Zur Sprachenfrage an den jüdischen Schulen Palästinas,” *Ost und West* 1 (January 1914): 19–26, especially 26.

94. Ben Zion Dinur described the Yishuv’s triumph as “the first miracle” on its path to national liberation. B. Dinburg, “Ha-nes shel tkumat yisrael vi’yesodotav ha-histori’im,” *Shivat tsiyon* 1 (1951): 44.

95. H. N. Bialik, “Ha-sefer ha-ivri,” *Ha-Tsfira*, August 29 and 31, and September 4, 1913. The revised version also appeared in a volume of Bialik’s complete works: *Kol kitve h. n. bialik* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1939), 194–201. On the differences between the versions, see Shmuel Werses, *Bein gilui le’kisui* (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-meuhad, 1984), 114–18. For the English version of Bialik’s essay: H. N. Bialik, *The Hebrew Book*, trans. Minnie Halkin (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1951).

96. Iris Parush, *Kanon sifrutit ve’ideologia leumit* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1992), 130–42.

97. Bialik, “Ha-sefer ha-ivri,” August 29, 1913.

98. Bialik, “Ha-sefer ha-ivri,” September 4, 1913.

99. Bialik, “Ha-sefer ha-ivri,” August 31, 1913.

100. Bialik, “Ha-sefer ha-ivri,” September 4, 1913.

101. For a discussion of Bialik’s 1914 text and his conception of translation, which he termed “prisoners ransoming,” see Rokem, *Prosaic Conditions*, 55–64.

102. Haim Nahman Bialik, "Al teudat ha-knesiya ha-tarbutit," *Devarim she'beal-pe* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1932), 1:9–14, here 10–12.

103. According to Israel Bartal, the very idea of *kinus* had its roots in the Wissenschaft des Judentums and particularly in Zunz's work. Israel Bartal, "The Kinnus Project: Wissenschaft des Judentums and the Fashioning of a 'National Culture' in Palestine," in *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality, and Cultural Diffusion*, ed. Yaakov Elman and Israel Gershoni (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 310–23.

104. Bialik alluded here to a statement made by Zunz to this effect in 1845. Leopold Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur* (Berlin, 1845), 1:21.

105. *Din ve'heshbon* 1913, 34–35.

106. Lang, *Daber ivrit!*, 2:674–81. According to Hebrew educator Ephraim Cohen-Reiss, Bialik called the Language War "a misunderstanding." Ephraim Cohen-Reiss, *Mizikhront ish-yerushalayim* (Jerusalem: Sifriyat ha-yishuv, 1967), 325.

107. Bialik, "Teudat ha-knesiya," 10.

108. His archive does, however, include drafts of short translations of texts by Lord Byron and Seneca. NLI, Arc. 4 791 6 1873.31.

109. Ahad Ha-Am to Odessa Committee, February 2, 1914, *Igrot Ahad Ha-Am*, 5:157–58. NLI, Arc. 4 791 10 1916.127; NLI, Arc. 4 791 2 1257.

110. A previous Hebrew translation was published as: Leon Pinsker, *Avtuimantsi-patsya*, translated by F. Frenkel (Berdichev, 1899). Another Hebrew version, discussed in Chapter 2, was published in 1884 by Shmuel Leib Zitron.

111. Ahad Ha-Am to Odessa Committee, February 2, 1914, *Igrot Ahad Ha-Am*, 5:178.

112. Ahad Ha-Am to Nahum Sokolow, November 5, 1915, *Igrot*, 5:232–33.

113. Ahad Ha-Am to Odessa Committee, May 18, 1914, *Igrot*, 5:177–78.

114. Ahad Ha-Am, "Torah she'ba'lev," *Kol kitve ahad ha-am*, 51–54; Steven J. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 87–88.

115. "Al dvar otsar ha-yahadut be'lashon ivrit," *Kol kitve*, 106.

116. Ulrich Gaier, *Herders Sprachphilosophie und Erkenntniskritik* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1988), 119–26.

117. Ahad Ha-Am, "Ha-lashon vesifruta," 94.

118. Ahad Ha-Am, 95.

119. Ahad Ha-Am, 96.

120. Belletristic and poetic pieces "impact most people and can draw their hearts to reflections and contemplation much more than abstract, analytic thought." See Ahad Ha-Am, "Teudat ha-shiloah," *Kol kitve*, 126.

121. *Kol kitve*, 127. In another essay, Ahad Ha-Am claimed that Hebrew was but "a half language," suffering from the absence of scholars of high rank expressing ideas in Hebrew. "Tsorekh ve'yekholet," *Kol kitve*, 130.

122. Chowers, *Political Philosophy of Zionism*, 171–89.
123. “Etsa tova,” *Kol kitve*, 133.
124. “Shinuy Arakhin,” *Kol kitve*, 154. See Golomb, “Al ha-pulmus ‘ha-nitscheani,’” 69–94.
125. “Shinuy Arakhin,” *Kol kitve*, 157.
126. “Thiyat ha-ruah,” *Kol kitve*, 178. See Dan Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 73–74; David Biale, *Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 140–45.
127. Tudor Parfitt, “Ahad Ha-Am’s Role,” *At the Crossroads*, 24–25.
128. Ahad Ha-Am, “Riv ha-leshonot,” *Kol kitve*, 403–6.
129. “Li’she’e’lat ha-lashon be’vatei ha-sefer,” *Kol kitve*, 456.
130. Ahad Ha-Am to Osip Zeitlin, August 24, 1913, in *Ahad Ha-Am: mikhtavim be’inyanei erets yisrael (1891–1926)*, ed. Shulamit Laskov (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2000), 444–45.
131. “Berur dvarim,” [written by Paul Nathan, n.d.], NLI, V 1975 85.
132. Ahad Ha-Am to Yehuda Grozovski, December 7, 1913, *Ahad Ha-Am: mikhtavim*, 470–73.
133. “Doktor pinsker u’mahbarto,” *Kol kitve*, 46; Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet*, 77–78. See also Shai Ginsburg, “Politics and Letters: On the Rhetoric of the Nation in Pinsker and Ahad Ha-Am,” *Prooftexts* 29, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 173–205. On the concept of “spiritual center” in Ahad Ha-Am’s work, see Shumsky, *Beyond the Nation-State*, 98–102.
134. “Ha-tora ve’ha-avoda,” *Kol kitve*, 173.
135. *Kol kitve*, 165.
136. “Kohen ve’navi,” *Kol kitve*, 91; Jacob B. Agus, “The Prophet in Modern Hebrew Literature,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 28 (1957): 289–324, here 309–13; Reuven Shoham, *Poetry and Prophecy: The Image of the Poet as a “Prophet”, a Hero and an Artist in Modern Hebrew Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 55–64.
137. Ahad Ha-Am to Odessa Committee, February 2, 1914, *Igrot*, 5:177–78.
138. Ahad Ha-Am to Alter Druyanow, April 14, 1916, *Igrot*, 5:258–59.
139. *Sefer pinsker*, 60.
140. *Sefer pinsker*, 55.
141. *Sefer pinsker*, 77.
142. “At first I wanted to use the verb ‘a.z.r.’ but all the combinations that came to my mind with this verb did not seem right to me, so eventually I had to use the verb ‘y.sh.a.’” Ahad Ha-Am to Sokolow, November 10, 1915, *Igrot*, 5:235.
143. *Sefer pinsker*, 51–85.
144. Alter Druyanow to Ahad Ha-Am, June 11, 1914, NLI, ARC. 4 791 2 1201.2.

145. Klausner to Ahad Ha-Am, September 30, 1921, NLI, ARC. 4 791 2 1495.2. See also Moshe Yosef Glickson's laudatory review, republished in *Kitve M. Glikson* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1940), 1:3–4.

146. *Igrot Ahad Ha-Am*, 6:xi.

## Chapter 5

1. Gershom Scholem, "An einem denkwürdigen Tage," *Judaica* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1963), 1:209.

2. Brenner, *Renaissance*, 103–9; Leora Batnitzky, *Idolatry and Representation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig Reconsidered* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 105–41; Peter Eli Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 237–74; Mara H. Benjamin, *Rosenzweig's Bible: Reinventing Scripture for Jewish Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 103–34; Gillman, *German Jewish Bible Translation*, 197–250; Seidman, *Faithful Renderings*, 153–98; Maren Ruth Niehoff, "The Buber-Rosenzweig Translation of the Bible within Jewish-German Tradition," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 44, no. 2 (1993): 258–79; Everett Fox, "Franz Rosenzweig as Translator," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 34 (1989): 371–84.

3. Gordin, *Scientific Babel*, 173–80.

4. Abraham Schlessinger, "Ein verschlossener Garten," *Der Jude* 5 (1917): 425–27.

5. Brenner, *Renaissance*, 186–97; Bechtel, *La Renaissance culturelle juive*, 75–139.

6. Martin Buber, *Drei Reden über das Judentum* (Frankfurt: Rütten & Loening, 1911).

7. Juliane Jacobi, "Einleitung," in *Martin Buber Werkausgabe* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 2005), 8:16–21; Chaim Schatzker, "Martin Buber's Influence on the Jewish Youth Movement in Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 23 (1978): 151–71; Robbert-Jan Adriaansen, *The Rhythm of Eternity: The German Youth Movement and the Experience of the Past, 1900–1933* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 68–74; Manuel Duarte de Oliveira, "Passion for Land and Volk: Martin Buber and neo-Romanticism," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 41 (1996): 239–60.

8. Shapira, "Buber's Attachment," 4–6.

9. It was only after his immigration to Palestine in 1938 that Buber started writing in Hebrew.

10. Buber to Ahad Ha-Am, January 12, 1902, NLI, ARC. Ms Var 350 n 57/I.

11. Ahad Ha-Am to Buber, January 27, 1902, Martin Buber, *Hilufei igrot* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1982), 1:133–34.

12. For instance: Ahad Ha-Am to Martin Buber, June 25, 1903, NLI, ARC. Ms. Var. 350 008 057.

13. Bnei-Moshe, a small Zionist organization in which Ahad Ha-Am partook in the 1890s, did not allow in members who were not proficient in Hebrew. See David H. Weinberg, *Between Tradition and Modernity* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996), 236.

14. Buber, *Werkausgabe*, 3:211–18, here 212.
15. Barbara Schaefer, *Berliner Zionistenkreise: Eine vereinsgeschichtliche Studie* (Berlin: Metropol, 2003), 142–52; Brenner, *Renaissance*, 22–31.
16. Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 11.
17. Buber, *Werkausgabe*, 3:218.
18. Buber, 3:214–15.
19. Buber, “Zionismus als Lebensanschauung und als Lebensform,” *Werkausgabe*, 3:138.
20. It is also important to note that the tension among Jewish nationalists over the centrality and use of Hebrew did not reflect an East-West dichotomy. The German branch of the Zionist organization had a leading role in the struggle against the Hilfsverein during the “language war.” In Palestine and Eastern Europe, orthodox non-Zionists as well as religious Zionists were divided over Hebrew’s becoming an everyday language.
21. David Rechter, “Bubermania’: The Jewish Youth Movement in Vienna, 1917–1919,” *Modern Judaism* 16, no. 1 (1996): 25–45, here 31–34; David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Master of the Kabbalah* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 25–30.
22. Ben Buzi, “Ha-mashber ba’histadrut ha-ivrit,” *Hed Ha-Zman*, February 23, 1912.
23. Peter Pulzer, “The First World War,” *German-Jewish History*, 3:360–70; Egmont Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 86–100; Eva C. Reichmann, “Der Bewußtseinswandel der deutschen Juden,” in *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution 1916–1923*, ed. Werner E. Mosse (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1971), 511–612; Ulrich Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001), 53–87.
24. Buber to Hans Kohn September 30, 1914. Martin Buber, *Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1972), 1:370–71.
25. Peter Hoeres, *Krieg der Philosophen: Die deutsche und die britische Philosophie im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2004), 213–93.
26. Simon Bernfeld, “Literarisches Jahresrevue,” *Jahrbuch für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* 18 (1915): 16–17.
27. Martin Buber, *Vom Geist des Judentums* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1916), 47.
28. Vogt, *Subalterne Positionierungen*, 197–251. Paul Mendes-Flohr has interpreted Buber’s search for a greater meaning underlying the war as mirroring the mysticism that permeated his philosophical and Zionist thought. Paul Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism to Dialogue: Martin Buber’s Transformation of German Social Thought* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 97–101.
29. Zechlin, *Deutsche Politik*, 144–54; Tobias Grill, “Pioneers of Germanness in the East? Jewish-German, German, and Slavic Perceptions of East European Jewry during the First World War,” *Jews and Germans in Eastern Europe*, 125–59.

30. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 157–60; Zosa Szajkowski, “The Struggle for Yiddish during World War I: The Attitude of German Jewry,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year-book* 9 (1964): 130–58.

31. Nachum Goldmann, *Von der weltkulturellen Bedeutung und Aufgabe des Judentums* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1916), 23.

32. Davis Trietsch, *Juden und Deutsche: Eine Sprach- und Interessengemeinschaft* (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1915). See also Fritz Lederer, “Volkssprache und Kultursprache,” *Ost und West* 4–5 (1916): 158.

33. Michael Berger, “Juden­zählung,” in *Enzyklopädie jüdischer Geschichte und Kultur*, ed. Dan Diner (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 2012), 242–44.

34. Sarah Panter, *Jüdische Erfahrungen und Loyalitätskonflikte im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 179–98, 269–88; Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 185–214.

35. Weitz, “Self-Determination,” 462–96.

36. Hagit Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe: The Distinctive Path of German Zionism* (Detroit, Jerusalem: Wayne State University Press, Magnes Press, Leo Baeck Institute, 1996), 32–33.

37. Joshua A. Fishman, “Interwar Eastern European Jewish Parties and the Language Issue,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 151 (2001): 175–89.

38. Shumsky, *Zweisprachigkeit und binationale Idee*, 89–97.

39. Max Brod, *Im Kampf um das Judentum* (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1920), 7–36.

40. *Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des XII. Zionisten-Kongresses in Karlsbad vom 1. bis 14. September 1921* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1922), 174–75.

41. M. Ungerfeld, “Ha-kongres ha-hamisha asar, mikhtavim me’ha-kongres,” *Ha-Tyfra*, September 6, 1927.

42. *Protokoll der Verhandlungen des XVI. Zionistenkongresses und der konstituierenden Tagung des Council der Jewish Agency für Palästina, Zürich, 28 Juli bis 14. August 1929* (London: Zentralbureau der Zionistischen Organisation, 1929), 159.

43. Halperin, *Babel in Zion*, 11–17, 99–103.

44. J. Kaufmann, “Die Hebräische Sprache und unsere nationale Zukunft,” *Der Jude* 6 (1916): 407–18.

45. S. Jabneëli, “Die Hebraisierung des Volkes,” *Der Jude* 10 (1919): 446–65.

46. Yizchak Epstein, “Israel und seine Sprache,” *Der Jude* 7 (1919): 322–26. Here 326.

47. “Lipschütz, Eliezer Meir,” in *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isaac Landman (New York: Universal Jewish Encyclopedia Inc., 1942), 7:78.

48. Kuzar, *Hebrew and Zionism*, 142–44.

49. E. M. Lipschütz, “Vom lebendigen Hebräisch, I,” *Der Jude* 5 (1918): 228–39, here 239.

50. E. M. Lipschütz, “Vom lebendigen Hebräisch, II,” *Der Jude* 6 (1918): 277–91, here 277.

51. Lipschütz, "Vom lebendigen Hebräisch, I," 237.
52. E. M. Lipschütz, "Die Zionisten und die hebräische Sprache," *Esra* 5 (1919): 139–46.
53. E. M. Lipschütz, *Vom lebendigen Hebräisch* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1920), 87–88.
54. Lipschütz, 90.
55. Lipschütz, 95.
56. See, e.g., Abraham Schlesinger, "Jakob Klatzkin," *Jüdische Rundschau*, November 20, 1925.
57. See Engelhardt, *Arsenale jüdischen Wissens*.
58. Yotam Hotam, *Modern Gnosis and Zionism* (London: Routledge, 2013), 123–54; Gideon Katz, "Ben kilayon kosmi le'thiya le'umit—iyun be'haguto shel yaakov klatskin," *Daat* 63 (2008): 131–46.
59. Jakob Klatzkin, *Probleme des modernen Judentums* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1918).
60. Klatzkin, 23–27.
61. Klatzkin, 24.
62. Klatzkin, 71.
63. Klatzkin, 130.
64. Klatzkin, 150–53.
65. Jakob Klatzkin, "Hakdama," in: Baruch Spinoza, *Torat ha-midot*, trans. Jakob Klatzkin (Ramat Gan: Masadah, 1967), ix–xxi.
66. Klatzkin, "Hakdama," xx.
67. Spinoza, *Torat ha-midot*, 386.
68. Jakob Klatzkin, *Otsar ha-munahim ha-filosofim* (Berlin: Eschkol, 1928), 8.
69. Jakob Klatzkin, *Ketavim*, ed. Avraham Kariv (Tel Aviv: Am oved, 1953), 340.
70. Seelig, *Strangers in Berlin*, 1–18; Brenner, *Renaissance*, 185–211; Shachar Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 105–26; Gennady Estraiikh, "Vilna on the Spree: Yiddish in Weimar Berlin," *Aschkenaz* 16 (2006): 103–27; David N. Myers, "Distant Relatives Happening onto the Same Inn: The Meeting of East and West as Literary Theme and Cultural Ideal," *Jewish Social Studies* 1, no. 2 (1995): 75–100; Bechtel, *Renaissance*, 201–51.
71. On Buber and Agnon, see Andrea Weilbacher, "Agnon and the Jewish Renaissance," in *Agnon and Germany: The Presence of the German World in the Writings of S. Y. Agnon*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Becker and Hillel Weiss (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2010), 17–39.
72. Chaim Nachman Bialik, "Das hebräische Buch," *Neue jüdische Monatshefte*, October 25, 1919, 25–35.
73. Bialik, "Das hebräische Buch," 31.



74. Chaim Nachman Bialik, "Jüdische Wissenschaft in fremder Sprache," *Der Jude* 10 (1924): 566–74. The Hebrew version appeared as: H. N. Bialik, "Mikh'tav el ha-orkhim," *Dvir* 1 (1923): viii–xiii.
75. Bialik, "Jüdische Wissenschaft," 566–67.
76. Bialik, 571–72.
77. Bialik, 566.
78. Alex Feig, "Wie lernt man Hebräisch," *Blau-Weiß Blätter* 5 (February 1916): 107–10.
79. A. Teena, "Zur hebräischen Renaissance," *Selbstwehr*, April 27, 1917.
80. Moses Rath, *Sfat Amenu: Lehrbuch der hebräischen Sprache für Schul- und Selbstunterricht* (Krakow: Self-published, 1914); Iris Bruce, *Kafka and Cultural Zionism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 165–67; Hartmut Binder, "Kafkas Hebräischstudien. Ein biographisch-interpretatorischer Versuch," *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 11 (1967): 527–56.
81. Abraham Steinert, "Pesach im Baranowitschi," *Der jüdische Student*, Summer 1917, 12.
82. Kurt Blumenfeld, "Wie gestalten wir unseren Nationalismus wesenhafter?" *Der jüdische Student*, November 27, 1916, 331–32. Emphasis in original.
83. Kurt Rosenthal, "Aufruf," *Der jüdische Student*, June 20, 1916, 222–23.
84. Gustav Witkowsky, "Hie Zwirn!" *Der jüdische Student*, May 1917, 434–45.
85. Hans Bloch, "[reply to Krojanker], IV" *Der jüdische Student*, June 20, 1916, 210.
86. Siegfried Weitzmann, "Nach Palästina," *Der jüdische Student*, August 18, 1916, 248–49.
87. Arnold Kutzinski, "Freiwilliges Ghetto!" *Der jüdische Student*, June 1917, 507.
88. Kurt Blumenfeld, "Abwehr," *Der jüdische Student*, June 1917, 480.
89. Gerhard Scholem, "Jugendbewegung, Jugendarbeit und Blau-Weiß," *Blau-Weiß Blätter*, August 1917, 28–29. On Scholem and the revival of Hebrew, see Barouch, *Between German*, 49–60; Zadoff, *Gershom Scholem: From Berlin to Jerusalem and Back*, 12–17.
90. Hugo Bergmann, "Ansprache," *Esra* 2 (1919): 38. On Bergmann's approach to the Jewish language question before the First World War, see Enrico Lucca, "Another West European Jewish Gaze: Hugo Bergmann, Bar Kochba, and His Stance toward Hebrew (and Yiddish) Language and Literature," *Yearbook for European Jewish Literature Studies* 6 (2019): 33–60.
91. Hugo Bergmann, "Das hebräische Buch und die deutschen Zionisten," *Der Jude* 6 (1919): 287–88.
92. David Rechter, *The Jews of Vienna and the First World War* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001), 109–10.
93. Max Mayer, "Von hebräischen Lehrbüchern," *Jerubbaal* (1918–19): 83–84.
94. Max Grunwald, "Zum Jugendtag," *Jerubbaal* (1918–19): 98; Elijah Rappeport, "Jung-Juda," *Jerubbaal* (1918–19): 26.

95. For instance, see Hugo Bergmann, "Fichtes Reden an die deutsche Nation," *Jerubbaal* (1918–19): 38–40.

96. Viktor Ch. Arlosoroff, "Ketzerforderungen," *Jerubbaal* (1918–1919): 192–93.

97. Gelber, *Melancholy Pride*, 16–54, especially 46.

98. Martin Buber, *Vom Geist des Judentums*, 2. Auflage (Munich: Kurt Wolff, 1919); Mendes-Flohr, *From Mysticism*, 101–26, here 102. Translation slightly modified.

99. Hermann Cohen, "Zionismus und Religion," *Werke*, ed. Hartwig Wiedebach (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2002), 17:211–21.

100. Cohen, "Zionismus und Religion," 219. See discussion in Hartwig Wiedebach, *The National Element in Hermann Cohen's Thought and Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 21–23.

101. Cohen, *Werke*, 17:220–21.

102. Martin Buber, "Begriffe und Wirklichkeit," *Der Jude* 5 (1916): 281–89.

103. Buber, 289.

104. Buber, "Referat über jüdische Erziehung," *Werkausgabe*, 8:80.

105. Buber, "Die Bildungsnot des Volkes und die Volksnot der Gebildeten," *Werkausgabe*, 8:176. In a 1933 essay, Buber separated between the "Hebrew-speaking man" and the "Hebrew man, who lets himself be addressed by the voice that speaks to him in the Hebrew Bible and who responds to it with his life." Martin Buber, "Biblischer Humanismus," *Der Morgen* 4 (October 1933): 242. English translations from: Martin Buber, *On the Bible*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer, trans. Michael A. Meyer (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 212–13.

106. Martin Buber, "Jüdisch leben," *Jerubbaal* (1918–19): 45–46. Also in *Werkausgabe*, 8:98–99.

107. Buber, *Werkausgabe*, 8:100.

108. Buber to Hugo Bergmann, September 9, 1919, in Buber, *Briefwechsel*, 2:57–58. English translation from: *The Letters of Martin Buber: A Life of Dialogue*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer and Paul Mendes-Flohr, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston, Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1991), 249.

109. Bergmann to Buber, September 19, 1919, Schmuël Hugo Bergmann, *Tagebücher & Briefe*, ed. Miriam Sambursky (Königstein: Athenäum, 1985), 1:128, translated in *Letters of Buber*, 249–50.

110. Buber to Bergmann, October 21, 1919, Buber, *Briefwechsel*, 2:61–62, translated in *Letters of Buber*, 251.

111. Buber to Bergmann, January 21, 1919, Buber, *Briefwechsel*, 2:28, translated in *Letters of Buber*, 241.

112. Buber to Scholem, December 13, 1924, Buber, *Briefwechsel*, 2:212–13, translated in *Letters of Buber*, 322–23.

113. Buber to Scholem, May 24, 1926, Buber, *Briefwechsel*, 2:257–58, translated in *Letters of Buber*, 342.

114. On political and religious tensions surrounding Hebrew literacy and writing in Eastern European Jewish communities in the nineteenth century, see Iris Parush, *The Sin of Writing: The Writing Revolution in Nineteenth Century Eastern European Jewish society* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2017).

115. Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, the Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 24.

116. Derrida, *Monolingualism*, 39–40.

117. Robert Alter, *Necessary Angels: Tradition and Modernity in Kafka, Benjamin, and Scholem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 25–63.

118. Alter, 37.

119. Barbara Schäfer, “Buber’s Hebrew Self: Trapped in the German Language,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (2007): 152–63, here 155.

120. Paul Mendes-Flohr, “Hebrew as a Holy Tongue: Franz Rosenzweig and the Renewal of Hebrew,” in *Hebrew in Ashkenaz*, 226–27.

121. Franz Rosenzweig, *Zweistromland: Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984), 463.

122. Benjamin Pollock, “From Nation State to World Empire: Franz Rosenzweig’s Redemptive Imperialism,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 11 (2003): 332–53.

123. Rosenzweig to Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy, October 5, 1918, *Die “Gritli”-Briefe: Briefe an Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy*, ed. Inken Rühle and Reinhold Mayer (Tübingen: Bilam, 2002), 160. Translation from Pollock, “Redemptive Imperialism,” 351.

124. Rosenzweig to Gertrud Oppenheim, May 1, 1917, Franz Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebücher*, ed. Rachel Rosenzweig und Edith Rosenzweig-Scheinmann (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 1:398–99.

125. Franz Rosenzweig, *Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt: Kauffmann Verlag, 1921), 380; Translation: Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Barbara Galli (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 321.

126. Batnitzky, *Idolatry and Representation*, 182–83.

127. Leora Batnitzky “Franz Rosenzweig on Translation and Exile,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 14 (2007): 131–43, particularly 136–38; Dana Hollander, *Exemplarity and Chosenness: Rosenzweig and Derrida on the Nation of Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 119–29.

128. Rosenzweig to His Parents, September 28, 1916, Rosenzweig, *Briefe*, 1:236.

129. Rosenzweig to Adele Rosenzweig, February 7, 1919, Rosenzweig, *Briefe*, 2:624.

130. Rosenzweig, *Zweistromland*, 723–24; original: Franz Rosenzweig, “Neuhebräisch? Anlässlich der Uebersetzung von Spinozas Ethik,” *Der Morgen* 2, no. 1 (April 1926): 105–9. English translation from Nahum N. Glatzer, ed., *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 264.

131. Rosenzweig, *Zweistromland*, 726; Glatzer, *Life and Thought*, 268.

132. Rosenzweig, *Zweistromland*, 726–27. In 1926, Scholem wrote a letter in honor of Rosenzweig's fortieth birthday, in which he ruminated on the apocalyptic danger underlying the secularization and vernacularization of Hebrew. See German and English versions in William Cutter, "Ghostly Hebrew, Ghostly Speech: Scholem to Rosenzweig, 1926," *Prooftexts* 10, no. 3 (September 1990): 413–33. See discussion in Biale, *Scholem*, 90–95.

133. Nahum Glatzer, "Ha-leshonot ve'ha-ivrit bimiyuhad bemishnato shel rosenzweig," in *Yovel shai*, ed. Baruch Kurzweil (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1958), 229–36.

134. Rachel Kaznelson, "Zwischen zwei Sprachen," *Der Jude* 7–8 (1923): 439–51. For the Hebrew version, see Rachel Katsnelson-Shazar, *Al admat ha-ivrit* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1966), 231–41. English translation from Harshav, *Language in Time*, 183–94.

135. Kaznelson, "Zwischen zwei Sprachen," 446; Harshav, *Language in Time*, 189–90.

136. Kaznelson, "Zwischen," 443; Harshav, *Language*, 187.

137. Kaznelson, "Zwischen," 449; Harshav, *Language*, 193.

138. Rosenzweig to Ernst Markowicz, November 2, 1924, Rosenzweig, *Briefe*, 2:997. Rosenzweig implied here that even the Judaism of Aher—the epitome of Jewish heresy in rabbinic literature—is preferable to the hollowness of formal Zionism.

139. Rosenzweig to His Parents, October 18, 1916, Rosenzweig, *Briefe*, 1:257.

140. Rosenzweig to Scholem, March 10, 1921, Rosenzweig, *Briefe*, 2:698–700. Translation from Franz Rosenzweig, *Life and Thought*, 100–102. On the letter and its intellectual contexts, see Galili Shahar, "The Sacred and the Unfamiliar: Gershom Scholem and the Anxieties of the New Hebrew," *Germanic Review* 83, no. 4 (2008): 299–320, particularly 302–8; David Biale, "God's Language and the Making of Secular Jewish Culture," in *Jewish Secularity: The Search for Roots and the Challenges of Relevant Meaning*, ed. Daniel M. Gordis and Zachary I. Heller (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2012), 55–68.

141. Rosenzweig, *Briefe*, 2:699; Rosenzweig, *Life and Thought*, 101.

142. Rosenzweig, *Briefe*, 2:699–700; Rosenzweig, *Life and Thought*, 102. Translation slightly modified.

143. Rosenzweig to Nahum Glatzer, June 10, 1929, Rosenzweig, *Briefe*, 2:1217–18.

144. Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Echolalias: On the Forgetting of Language* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 45–51.

145. Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung* (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1936), 300. English translation from Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, *Scripture and Translation*, trans. Lawrence Rosenwald and Everett Fox (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 168.

146. Michael Fishbane, *The Garments of Torah* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 81–98.

147. Buber and Rosenzweig, *Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, 45; *Scripture and Translation*, 21.
148. Franz Rosenzweig, "Die Schrift und das Wort," *Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, 76–78; *Scripture and Translation*, 40–41.
149. Buber, "Aus den Anfängen unserer Schriftübertragung," *Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, 322–23; *Scripture and Translation*, 179.
150. Benjamin, *Rosenzweig's Bible*, 103–34.
151. Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger*, 238–48; Martin Jay, "Politics of Translation: Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin on the Buber-Rosenzweig Bible," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 21 (1976): 3–24.
152. Klatzkin to Buber and Rosenzweig, August 8, 1928, NLI, ARC. Ms. Var. 350 008 369.
153. Buber, "Über die Wortwahl in einer Verdeutschung der Schrift," *Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, 142–43; *Scripture and Translation*, 77.
154. Buber, *Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung*, 143; *Scripture and Translation*, 77.
155. Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Martin Buber: A Life of Faith and Dissent* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019), 202–4.
156. Schalom Ben-Chorin, *Zwiesprache mit Martin Buber* (Gerlingen: Bleicher Verlag, 1978), 20–21.
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## Chapter 6

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4. Amos Funkenstein, "The Dialectics of Assimilation," *Jewish Social Studies* 1, no. 2 (1995): 1–14.
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7. Elias Tcherikower, "Der onhoyb fun der yidisher sotsyalistisher bavegung," *Historische shriftn* 1 (1929): 469–532, here 485, 494–95.
8. Fishman, *Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture*, 22.

9. Veidlinger, *Jewish Public Culture*, 178.
10. Susanne Marten-Finnis, *Sprachinseln: Jiddische Publizistik in London, Wilna und Berlin 1880–1930* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999), 22–25.
11. Michels, *Fire in Their Hearts*, 3–5.
12. Rudolf Rocker, *The London Years*, trans. Joseph Leftwich (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications; Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), 46–70; Mina Graur, *An Anarchist “Rabbi”: The Life and Teachings of Rudolf Rocker* (New York: St. Martin’s Press; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), 70–111.
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14. Fishman, *Modern Yiddish Culture*, 48–61. On debates among Polish Jewish socialists in the 1890s concerning the value of Yiddish as a language of political agitation, see Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality*, 47–53.
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18. Nordau, *Zionistische Schriften*, 208.
19. Heinrich Loewe, *Die Sprachen der Juden* (Cologne: Jüdischer Verlag, 1911), 42. On Loewe’s contribution to Hebraist activity in Germany, see Frank Schlöffel, *Heinrich Loewe: Zionistische Netzwerke und Räume* (Berlin: Neofelis Verlag, 2018), 259–313.
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21. Heinrich Loewe, *Die jüdischdeutsche Sprache der Ostjuden: ein Abriß* (Berlin: Komitee für den Osten, 1915), 1.
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27. Pinhas Shifman, "Ha-tnu'a ha-ivrit ve'she'ifote'ah," in *Darkenu* (Odessa: Hovei sfat ever, 1916), 32.
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29. Menahem Sheinkin, "Sfatenu," *Kitve menahem sheinkin*, ed. A. Hermoni (Jerusalem: Reuven Mas, 1935) 94–95, 99.
30. Sheinkin, 100.
31. Azriel Gintzig, "Ahrei ha-ra'ash," *Ha-Eshkol* 6 (1909): 1, 5.
32. Menahem Ussishkin, "Sihot be'inyanei ha-hinukh," in *Darkenu*, 85.
33. Simon Bernfeld, "Bhinat ha-me'oraot ve'ha-ma'asim," *Ha-Shiloah* 16 (1907): 204.
34. Shimon Lazar, "Ha-mahapekha be'turkiya ve'ha-yehudim," *Ha-Mitspe*, August 14, 1908.
35. [Eliezer Ben-Yehuda], "Le'milhemet mitsva," *Ha-Or*, April 6, 1910.
36. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, "Ha-ananim," *Ha-Tsvi*, July 17, 1914.
37. Moshe Kleinman, "Leshonoteinu," *Ha-Shiloah* 18 (1908): 503.
38. On Birnbaum's attachment to ideas of Eastern European Jewish culture and the *Ostjude*, see Nick Block, "Nathan Birnbaum's Messianism," 61–78.
39. Mathias Acher, "Die juedische Renaissance-Bewegung," *Ost und West* 9 (September 1902): 579. English translation from: Rabinovich, *Jews and Diaspora Nationalism*, 48.
40. Nathan Birnbaum, "Ostjuedische Aufgaben," in *Ausgewählte Schriften zur jüdischen Frage, band I* (Czernowitz: Birnbaum & Kohut, 1910), 269. Translation from Joshua Fishman, "Nathan Birnbaum's *The Tasks of Eastern European Jews*," *International Journal of the Sociology of Languages* 226 (2014): 92. Translation slightly modified.
41. Birnbaum, "Ostjuedische Aufgaben," 272–73; Fishman, "Birnbaum's *Tasks*," 95.
42. On the Czernowitz Congress, see Kalman Weiser and Joshua A. Fogel, ed., *Czernowitz at 100: The First Yiddish Language Conference in Historical Perspective* (Plymouth, MA: Lexington Books, 2010); Olson, *Birnbaum and Jewish Modernity*, 154–208. On Perets's stylistic registers in his Czernowitz address and their significance, see Marc Caplan, "Y. L. Peretz and the Politics of Yiddish," *Czernowitz at 100*, 77–93.
43. *Di ershte yidishe shprakh-konferents: barikhtn, dokumentn un opklangen fun der tshernovitser konferents* (Vilna: Yidisher visnshaftlekher institut, 1931).
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45. Goldsmith, *Modern Yiddish Culture*, 139.
46. Trachtenberg, *Revolutionary Roots of Modern Yiddish*, 13.
47. *Di ershte*, 149.
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50. *Di ershte*, 151.
51. *Di ershte*, 152.
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54. *Di ershte*, 155.
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57. Borokhov, “Oyfgaben,” 4; Borochov, “Tasks,” 357.
58. On Borokhov’s thought within broader linguistic debates in the Yiddish cultural sphere, see Trachtenberg, *Revolutionary Roots*, 108–34.
59. Borokhov, “Oyfgaben,” 8; Borochov, “Tasks,” 361.
60. Borokhov, “Oyfgaben,” 11–12; Borochov, “Tasks,” 364.
61. Borokhov, “Oyfgaben,” 11–12; Borochov, “Tasks,” 364–65.
62. Esther Malka Frumkin, who also participated in the Czernowitz conference, published in 1917 a study of the language question in Jewish schools. She wrote: “Is Yiddish corrupted German? Yes, if French is corrupted Latin; if Dutch is corrupted German; if Russian is corrupted Old Slavic—if contemporary German is corrupted Middle High German, then Yiddish is also corrupted German.” E——R [Esther Frumkin], *Tsu der frage vegen der yudisher folkshul* (Vilna, 1917), 50.
63. Mordkhe Shaechter, *Laytish mame-loshn* (New York: Yidish-lige, 1986), 54–69; Dovid Katz, *Tikney takones: fragn fun yidisher stilistik* (Oxford: Oxford Yiddish Press, 1993), 106–35.
64. Borokhov, “Oyfgaben,” 11–12; Borochov, “Tasks,” 365–66.
65. Adler Peckerar, *The Allure of Germanness*; Marc Miller, “The Artificiality of German in Modern Yiddish Poetry: A New Perspective on *daytshmerish*,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 4, no. 2 (July 2005): 123–35; Steffen Krogh, “*Dos iz eyne vabre geshikhhte . . .* On the Germanization of Eastern Yiddish in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Jews and Germans*, 88–114; Shneer, *Yiddish and the Creation of Soviet Jewish Culture*, 63–65.
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67. Sh. Niger (Charney), “Daytshmerish,” *Lebn un visnschaft* 11–12 (1912): 49–55, here 49.



68. Niger (Charney), 52–53.
69. Schaechter, *Laytish mame-loshn*, 55.
70. On Syrkin's trajectory and influence as a Russian Jewish socialist, see Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 288–328. On Zhitlowsky, see Weinberg, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, 83–144; Michels, *Fire in Their Hearts*, 125–78; Kay Schweigmann-Greve, *Chaim Zhitlowsky: Philosoph, Sozialrevolutionär und Theoretiker einer säkularen nationaljüdischen Identität* (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2012).
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72. Haim Zhitlowsky, "Hebraizm un yidishizm," *Dos naye lebn* 1, no. 11 (September 1923): 11.
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77. M. Weinreich, "Daytshmerish toyg nit," *Yidish far ale* 4 (June 1938): 99–106.
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79. Noah Prylucki, "Metodologishe bamerkungen tsum problem daytshmerish," *Yidish far ale* 8 (October 1938): 201–9. On Prylucki's political and scholarly work, see Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation*.
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81. On Kalmanovich: Karlip, *Tragedy of a Generation*.
82. Zelig Kalmanovich, "Der shoyresh fun daytshmerish," *Yidish far ale* 8 (1938): 212.
83. Loewe, *Sprachen der Juden*, 60.
84. Lederhendler, *Jewish Responses to Modernity*, 15; Raphael Patai, *Tents of Jacob: The Diaspora, Yesterday and Today* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 128; Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle*, 161.
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93. Tsviyon, "Yidishe interesn," *Folksblat*, August 30, 1933.
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## Chapter 7

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20. “Ha-germanit etsel pkidei ha-k.h.k.,” *Hazit ha-am*, August 25, 1933.

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33. Dan Diner, *Rituelle Distanz: Israels deutsche Frage* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2015), 14–17.

34. “Sharet hazar le’yisrael,” *Davar*, September 12, 1952.

35. On Horkheimer’s approach to Israeli and Jewish matters after the Holocaust, see Jack Jacobs, *The Frankfurt School, Jewish Lives, and Antisemitism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 132–42. Horkheimer’s letter is reprinted in Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1996), 18:230–32.

36. As Yfaat Weiss shows, Schwabe was—alongside Hugo Bergmann—one of the supporters of the reinstatement of teaching German at the Hebrew University in the early 1950s. Weiss, “Back to the Ivory Tower,” *Sprache, Erkenntnis, und Bedeutung*, 247–63.

37. Horkheimer to Schwabe, March 24, 1952, NLI, ARC. Ms. Var. 350 09 25.

38. Schwabe to Horkheimer, August 28, 1952, NLI, ARC. Ms. Var. 350 09 25.

39. The recipient’s city in the letter appeared as “Frankfort on Main.”

40. Sanders, *Biography of a Language*, 164–68.

41. Nahum Sokolow, “‘Ha-notsri’ shel germanya ha-hitlerit,” *Moznaim* 1, no. 4 (1935): 1–16.

42. Sokolow, 3.

43. Sokolow, 12.

44. Sokolow, 8.

45. Raquel Werdyger-Stepak, *Kehilat ha-sofrim ha-ivri'im be'erets yisrael u'tguvata le'nokhav ha-shoa (1939–1945)* (PhD diss., Tel Aviv University, 2011), 437–42; Na'ama Sheffi, *Germanit be'ivrit*, 193–95.

46. Aba Arikha, “Ein ha-kore,” *Ha-Mashkif*, September 22, 1944.

47. R. Hasman, “kehut ve'kshihut,” *Ha-Tsofe*, December 29, 1944.

48. Moshe Ungerfeld, “ve'itkha ha-sliha,” *Ha-Tsofe*, December 8, 1944.

49. Y. Tsdadi, “kmatim,” *Ha-Tsofe*, October 5, 1945.

50. D. B. M. “morav shel james middleton,” *Al ha-mishmar*, December 24, 1944.

51. H. Ben-Yeruhim, “rak be'lo matsavei ruah,” *Ha-Mashkif*, March 2, 1945.

52. Israel Cohen, “ha-lashon be'kur ha-mahapekha,” *Moznaim* 5 (1946): 308–12. Emphasis in original.

53. Cohen, “ha-lashon be'kur,” 311.

54. Cohen, “ha-lashon be'kur,” 312.

55. Mendes-Flohr, *Life of Faith and Dissent*, 203–4.

56. Raphael P. Aronstein, “Hine ha-yehudi klemperer,” *Orlogin* 1 (December 1950): 226–34.

57. Aronstein, “Hine ha-yehudi klemperer,” 229.

58. Aronstein, 234.

59. Na'ama Sheffi, “Cultural Manipulation: Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss in Israel in the 1950s,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 4 (1999): 619–39.

60. Sh. R., “Al hudo shel et,” *Ha-Mashkif*, April 24, 1941.

61. Moshe Ungerfeld, “Meshorerim’, germanizatorim ve'rahmanim aluvim,” *Ha-Tsofe*, August 25, 1944.

62. Niels Hansen, *Aus dem Schatten der Katastrophe: Die deutsch-israelischen Beziehungen in der Ära Konrad Adenauer und David Ben Gurion* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2004), 25.

63. Moshe Sharett to Moshe Shapira, August 3, 1951, Israel State Archives (hereafter ISA), 714 / 9 G.

64. Y. Kisilov to Moshe Sharett, Sep. 9, 1951, ISA, 714 / 9 G.
65. Y. Shem-I, "ve'shuv be'rov shel 3 kolot," *Herut*, December 4, 1951.
66. Pinhas Rosen to Cabinet Secretary, July 13, 1959, ISA, 55 / 22—TT.
67. "Bein ha-zmanim," *Zmanim*, March 18, 1954.
68. Sh. H. Bergmann, "Ha-germanit," *Davar*, September 28, 1959.
69. Natan. A, "Ha-omnam ko gdola ha-herpa?" *Davar*, October 9, 1959.
70. Amit Pinchevski, Tamar Liebes, and Ora Herman, "Eichmann on the Air: Radio and the Making of an Historic Trial," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 27, no. 1 (March 2007): 1–25.
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72. [Pinhas Dayan, ed.], *Milon nivim, munahim, u'vituyim me'yubdaim le'hakalat tirgumo ha-abid shel homer ha-re'ayot ba'safa ha-germanit* (Jerusalem: Israel Police, [1961]).
73. Shalom Rosenfeld, "Abgase—Zwangsterilisierung," *Maariv*, April 11, 1961.
74. Shalom Rosenfeld, "masa gey ha'hariga ba'mishpat bi'yerushalaim," *Maariv*, April 17, 1961.
75. Yaacov Even-Hen "Yoman ha-mishpat," *Ha-Tsofe*, April 12, 1961.
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81. Moshe Tavor, "Yoman ha-mishpat," *Davar*, June 21, 1961.
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83. Menahem Shmuel, "Kol ha-mekhona ba'mishpat," *Ha-Boker*, April 21, 1961.
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88. *Ha-mishpat shel Adolf Eichmann: reshumot mishpat ha-yoets ha-mishpati shel memshelet yisrael neged adolf eichmann be'vet ha-mishpat ha-mehozzi u'be'vet ha-mishpat be-elyon beshevet ke'vet mishpat le'irurim plili'im bi'yerushalayim* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Justice, 2003), 121, 1474.
89. *Ha-mishpat*, 1473–74.
90. *Ha-mishpat*, 1499.
91. *Ha-mishpat*, 1339–40.

92. *Ha-mishpat*, 1343.
93. *Ha-mishpat*, 1364–65.
94. *Ha-mishpat*, 1372, 1244.
95. *Ha-mishpat*, 1451.
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97. *Ha-mishpat*, 1071, 1029.
98. *Ha-mishpat*, 1071.
99. *Ha-mishpat*, 1194.
100. *Ha-mishpat*, 1298.
101. *Ha-mishpat*, 1370.
102. *Ha-mishpat*, 1390, 1391, 1398, 1405, 1417.
103. *Ha-mishpat*, 1374, 1413, 1415.
104. *Ha-mishpat*, 1518. Video recording of the trial, session 105, 13:10, posted by Yad Vashem and the Israel State Archives, May 24, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y2eqzEekWto>.
105. Video recording of the trial, session 106, 40:30. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUsrodS8k8k>
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107. Na'ama Sheffi, *Ring of Myths*, 71–102; Michael Brenner, “Between Triumph and Tragedy: The Use and Misuse of Hebrew in Germany from Mendelssohn to Eichmann,” *Prooftexts* 33, no. 1 (2013): 9–24, here 18–21.
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111. “Rig’ei hakhra’ah: Horst Köhler bi’mli’at ha-kneset,” Knesset Channel, February 2, 2005, posted by the Knesset Channel, November 23, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScrPRwZ4fI4>.
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113. See Steven J. Zipperstein, *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History* (New York: Liveright, 2018).

114. November 9, 1971. Bergmann, *Tagebücher*, 2:644–45. Quoted in Aschheim, *Beyond the Border*, 20. Translation slightly modified.

### Epilogue

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3. *Stenographisches Protokoll, Zionisten-Kongresses 1911*, 210–11.

4. Yonatan Mendel, *The Creation of Israeli Arabic: Political and Security Considerations in the Making of Arabic Language Studies in Israel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Gil Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient: Expertise in Arab Affairs and the Israeli State* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 60.

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**T**he German language holds a deeply controversial place in the modern history of European Jews, representing different—often conflicting—historical currents. It was the language of the German classics, of Jewish emancipation, and of the Zionist movement, but also the language of Hitler, Goebbels, and German guards in Nazi concentration camps. The crucial role of German in shaping Jewish national culture and politics in the late nineteenth century has been largely overshadowed by the catastrophic events that befell Jews under Nazi rule.

*German as a Jewish Problem* tells the Jewish history of the German language, focusing on Jewish national movements in Central and Eastern Europe and Palestine/Israel. Marc Volovici considers key writers and activists whose work reflected the multilingual nature of the Jewish national sphere and the centrality of the German language within it. He argues that it is impossible to understand the histories of modern Hebrew and Yiddish without situating them in relation to German. This book offers a new understanding of the language problem in modern Jewish history, turning to German to illuminate the questions and dilemmas that largely defined the experience of European Jews in the age of nationalism.

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